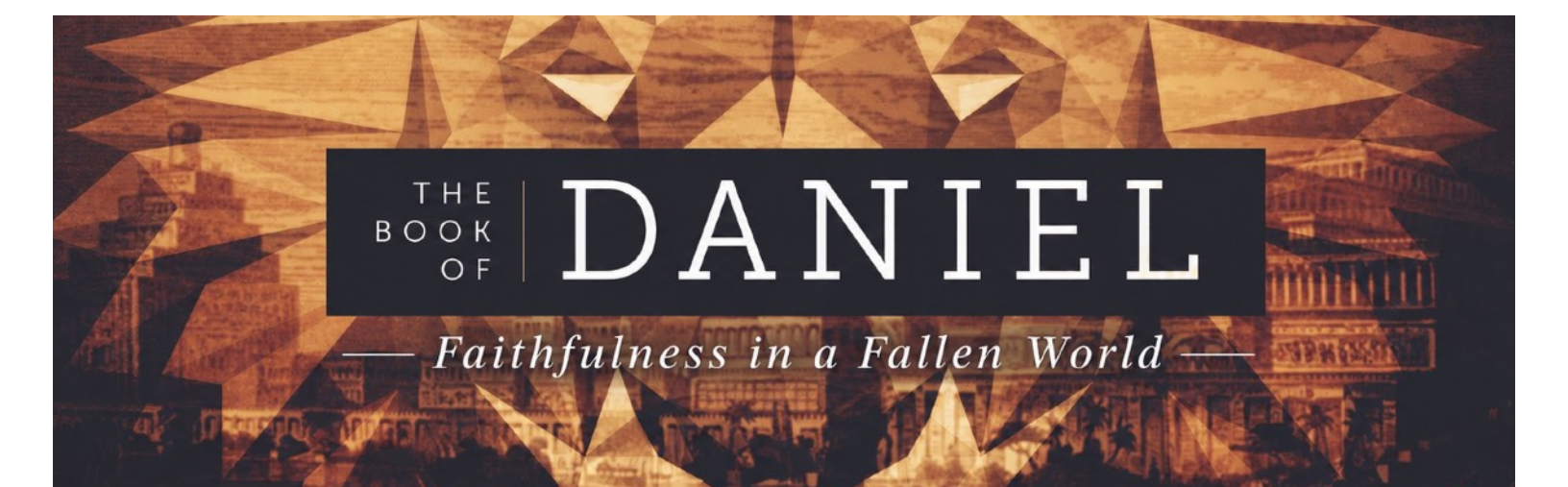




THE
BOOK
OF

DANIEL

— *Faithfulness in a Fallen World* —

DANIEL 3

9/5/2026

#4 - “Bow or Burn”

Intro:

What an incredible day in worship! I love seeing the Lord at work in the waters of baptism. Maybe today, you’ve felt God leading you to be baptized. If you’re a christian, but you’ve never been baptized, its time. Philip was with the Ethiopian, and when he came to believe in Jesus, they came upon some water and he asked “what’s keeping me from being baptized?” — Philip got in the water, “Nothing.” Let me ask you that question today. Christian, what’s keeping you from being baptized? Be sure to talk to a pastor and lets discuss that next step in your faith.

Baptism is standing boldly for Jesus. You’re announcing, “I am not ashamed of the gospel... Jesus is my Lord and Savior, and I want to follow Him with my whole life.” — In Baptism, you’re swimming against the current in the white-water rapids of this world. Submission to Jesus goes against your personal autonomy. Standing on the Word of God as the truth in a world of lies may cost you. Refusing to bow to the god of money, or sex, or popularity will make you stick out like a sore thumb.

In the book of Daniel chapter 3, King Nebuchadnezzar built a 90ft tall statue of gold... He demands that all the people bow and worship his idol... but Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse to bow.

The King is furious. He orders the fiery furnace be heated up and he threatens to cast them into the fire if they don't bow. — Now, here's where we face some questions for today:

Who am I going to be? Who am I going to live for? What God will I serve? — will you stand firm for the God of the Bible when everyone else bows to idols?

Daniel chapter 3... stand in honor of God's Word.

READ — DANIEL 3

King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its breadth six cubits. He set it up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent to gather the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Then the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. And they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. And the herald proclaimed aloud, "You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. And whoever does not

fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace.” Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews. They declared to King Nebuchadnezzar, “O king, live forever! You, O king, have made a decree, that every man who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image. And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace. There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no attention to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, “Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?”

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter.

If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated. And he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the burning fiery furnace. Because the king's order was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, “Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?” They answered and said to the king, “True, O king.” He answered and said, “But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods.”

Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace; he declared, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!” Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not

singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them. Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king’s command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God. Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way.” Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

PRAY

Father, thank you for the stories of faithfulness like this. Your power is indisputable. Who can do what you do? What god could render the hottest flames heat-less? You love when your people take risks of faith. You love when we hold loosely to this life and cling tightly to you. Remind us that this world is not our home... so we won’t be serenaded by the temptations of our day and bow our lives to idols. Lord, we want to stand for you, even if we stand alone. Give us bold faith. Guard us from the comfort of compromise and the safety of the slave quarters. Thank you Lord Jesus for enduring the furnace of death and removing its sting for us. All our hope is in you.

In Jesus name we pray, AMEN.

SERMON

At the end of Daniel 2, the amazing dream interpretation has been given. Daniel told the king that his kingdom would not last. There are other kingdoms coming after you, and they won't last either. But there is a stone coming that will crush them all. That kingdom will last forever. Of course that stone is prophetic of the coming Christ and His everlasting Kingdom.

The king bows before Daniel in amazement and says “truly your God is God of gods and Lord of kings...” — you might think this is a moment of conversion for King Nebuchadnezzar. But, in the very next chapter, he is exposed, not as a man who just met the one true God, but as a man who wants to be his own god. — Its one thing to be charmed by God, and another to be changed by Him.

Scholars say that between chapter 2 and 3 is about 15 years. Time can be a bad teacher. We forget, but God does not.

So, he builds a huge statue. The word image is used 5 times in chapter 2 and 11 times in chapter 3. We're meant to make the connection between the dream of a statue and this actual golden statue image. Nebuchadnezzar is building the statue, but its not just a head of gold... he rejects the word of God that his empire will crumble.

Nebuchadnezzar wanted to unite all the people of his kingdom... he chose religion / worship to unify them.

Next to Daniel and the Lions Den, this is probably the most famous story in the book... so I want to point us quickly to some points of application:

1. You Will be Pressured to Bow. (3:1-7)

Look at all the hype surrounding this moment. A huge and glorious statue has been constructed, all the governing officials are summoned, the whole kingdom of people have come for the dedication, the orchestra is assembled... and the penalty for resistance is frightening - a fiery furnace.

The King's Command — Fall down and worship or else

All the people are there... Hundreds of thousands of people, given the order, When you hear the sound of the music, fall down in worship! (Side-note: Music has always been part of the propaganda system of the world. Music trains your heart.)

Whenever the music plays, everyone must bow down in worship before the golden image.

You say... that will never happen here. Umm, do you remember just a few years ago our government closed down churches? Pastors were fined or imprisoned for hosting large gatherings. Many were commanded to do things against their conscience or else lose their jobs. — it is amazing how fast things can change.

- Joseph was a great hero in Egypt, but then a new Pharaoh came along who didn't know Joseph. All the Jews suddenly became slaves.
- Jesus came into Jerusalem on Sunday to a cheering crowd "Hosanna!" And just days later that same crowd was shouting "Crucify Him!"

Do not be lulled to sleep. Wake up church.

Their Courage

The drums are beating, the horns and strings playing in concert, like the biggest “burning-man festival” ever. The beat drops and Now, everyone drops on their faces... well not everyone.

The few take a stand. They’re dragged before the King. He reiterates the command and the consequences. He gave them another chance to save themselves.

Consider how they could have justified their own compromise:

- Hey... you know the Lord looks at the “heart”... we could bow with our bodies, but in our hearts stay devoted to YHWH. We could even tell Nebuchadnezzar that if you want.
- OR... we could imagine that this statue is a symbol of our God. Just think about our God, instead of theirs.
- Guys, what good are we if we’re dead? We are leaders here... doing really important stuff. If we preserve our lives, we preserve our influence.
- Cheap grace... our God is gracious, slow to anger. He will forgive us. Lets just do it, and confess it later.
- He’s not telling us we can’t worship our God, just we need to also worship their gods when the music plays. All the other time, we can be solely devoted to the God of the Bible.

Its easy to convince yourself to compromise.

They didn’t need to rethink it. The King called them up to give them one final warning and this second chance was just so it could be made plain. Their defiance to this king was actually devotion to the One True King.

Look at their response: “O King, we don’t even need to answer you about this.” Absolute Ballers. Listen, they didn’t need to go pray about this. 9/10 times, you don’t need to go think it over. Rationalization sometimes breeds compromise. There’s nothing to reconsider. — We respect you O King... but your authority has limitations and you have just exceeded them.

Conviction in the truth precedes courage. They refused to bow down because they knew the word of God. God’s law is clear — #2 “*You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God...*” (Ex. 20)

They stood against their government when their government required they disobey God. — this is the same kind of courage we see in...

Exodus 1 — the Hebrew midwives refused to kill the Hebrew baby boys in delivery. The Pharaoh commanded they murder the babies, but they feared God and would not do it. God loves every little baby, He knits them together in their mother’s womb. No one has the right to kill God’s babies. No matter what any human government says.

Acts 5 — the disciples were commanded to never heal or preach in the name of Jesus again... but they flatly and boldly refused to obey that command. It would mean directly disobeying Christ’s command. “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

Do you want to be accepted into society so badly that you’re willing to cave on christian convictions? The cost of acceptance

today is conformity. If you walk to the beat of God's drum on issues of human sexuality, morality, relativism, and other hot-button issues - you will be silenced or worse. Charlie Kirk, for example, took a stand on college campuses... held open debates, and stood for truth. And, he was silenced with a bullet.

What cost is too high for you? The question is not IF the pressure will come, but what will you do when the music starts and everyone else bows down?

2. Entrust the Outcome to God. (3:8-18)

Faith doesn't guarantee results. Sometimes people say, "I believe for a miracle" — we have to remember, our faith is in God. He is good, He knows best. He is able, and He is sovereign. AND He doesn't always heal like we hope. He doesn't always get us out of a jam. He doesn't always keep us from trouble. God does not always heal our bodies like we want. He never promised that. — He is not our genie in the bottle that when we rub on Him in prayer, He pops out to do our bidding. No.

Our faith isn't meant to control the outcomes, but to trust in the God who does. They said, "Our God is able to deliver us, but even if He doesn't, we will not bow."

Even if. We need a faith that trusts God "even if." What happens if we only believe in God to do what we want? Well, when He doesn't do it, we lose faith. We blame ourselves, or we blame Him. But, God is God... we are not.

They truly believe in the power of God - *He is able to deliver us.* And, they submit to His will... "but even if he doesn't" - meaning God can choose. He's not obligated to do what we want, but He is always worthy of our devotion. They aren't negotiating with God.

“Lord if you get us out of this, we’ll _____.” They also don’t hold God in their debt - “Lord, you saw how we didn’t bow down. Everyone else bowed. But, we’ve been good. So, we deserve your help.” — that’s not how it works either.

Faith Obeys, with no strings attached. God is not on the hook to reward our faithful obedience. John the Baptist obeyed God, stood boldly before Herod, and lost his head. Stephen preached with courage, and was stoned to death. Most of all, Jesus was absolutely perfect - and was rejected by men, crucified, and forsaken by God.

So... The King is furious. He had the fire heated up 7x hotter than normal. That was about 15,000°F or more. So hot that the guards were killed by the flames. — they were tied up, with all their clothes on, and they fell into the furnace.

They weren’t rescued from it, they would have to go through it. Sometimes that’s the case for us too. Whatever your trial... God doesn’t always promise to rescue us from it, but He is refining us through it. They discovered more about God in that fire than they could have ever known in the comforts of compromise.

Take note. Chapter 1 there was a test of faith and courage regarding Meat and Wine. A decision about diet, and it was a private test. Now, in chapter 3, its about bowing to the golden image in front of everyone, and if you don’t you’re toast. — notice that smaller tests are meant to build your fortitude, strengthen you for bigger battles. Fight and win the small ones. Conquer yourself, so you can slay the Giant. You might say “I would never bow down to that idol” ... but you’ve already bowed down over much less.

In most of these decisions for us today, there is no gun to our heads... but no gun is needed. We bow willingly.

The faithful heroes in Hebrews 11... some are miraculously delivered — they “quenched the power of fire or escaped the edge of the sword”... but, without any shift of tone, the faithful are described as those who were “stoned... sawn in two... destitute, afflicted, mistreated.” (Heb. 11:34-37) Both outcomes of faith are counted as victories.

“Even If” faith is more interested in Obedience than Deliverance!
These young men were ready to die for the Lord, because they had been faithful to live for Him.

God is the treasure. Faith trusts Him, EVEN IF.

3. You are not ALONE

King Neb looked into the fire. He doesn't see 3 men but 4, unbound and walking around, unharmed! Now that's amazing. The only thing the fire burned up was the ropes that bound them. How cool is that? God controls the flames so specifically that He only allows it to consume their handcuffs. No hair, no clothing, they didn't even smell like smoke. (3:27) Now, I am encouraged that there are 3 of them.

These young men walked this road together, *they had each other*. You are invited into this kind of community by joining the local church. Hard stuff is easier when you're not alone.

And, there was a fourth man, who looks like a son of God... that's a pretty incredible description of Christ, in the Old Testament. Can you imagine what the conversation was like walking around in that fire? They chose not to save themselves through compromise...

and the Son of God chose to stand with them in the flames. They weren't kept out of the fire, ***Christ was with them*** in it.

The moment meant to end their story, God meant for His own glory... Even the king who built the statue and lit the furnace now publicly praises God.

He calls to them... “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, *servants of the Most High God*, come out and come here.” (3:26) The king acknowledges the power of their God, greater than any other. He recognizes the presence of their God... “*Blessed be their God who sent his angel and delivered his servants* [now here's the summary of what we should learn] *who trusted in Him, and set aside the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God.*”

The point of this story is not that God will always rescue us from every fiery trial. In fact, the Bible you hold in your hand is the printed product of many who were burned at the stake: William Tindale - burned alive. John Huss - burned at the stake. Jon Rogers - burned alive. The point isn't that we will not suffer or will not die... they knew what Paul would later write: To live is Christ and to die is Gain. They “loved not their lives, even to death” — The One true God is worthy of my whole life, even all the way to death.

How about us? We have all the more reason to stand together with conviction in a world of compromise. We should never back down. We aren't just on the outside of a fire that couldn't burn them, we are on the other side of an empty tomb that couldn't hold Him! We know their story and we know the greatest story!

Jesus bore the heat of the cross. Alone. No deliverance. No rescue for Christ. He was consumed for our compromise for our failings. But the flames of death couldn't defeat Him. He rose. And because He lives we can live or die for Him.

Pray.

Communion:

As we turn to the Lord's table. Remember, there is a far more intense fire that doesn't just destroy the body, but damns the soul. Jesus is the fourth man in that fire. He stood in the furnace for you. Just as the fire had no power to hurt Sharach, Meshach, and Abednego... in Christ, you will be shielded from the wrath of God. The bread is His body broken in that furnace, and the cup is his blood poured out in it for you. He walked in alone, endured death and came out un-singed.

He was broken so you can stand firm today, fearless. He was forsaken and alone, so you never will be. Whatever pressure to bow and compromise that you face, whatever cost of obedience, come to the table knowing the hottest fire has already been walked through on your behalf.