

“FACING PRESSURE TO CONFORM TO THE WORLD”

DANIEL 3:1-12

Theme: The world exerts unmerciful pressure to destroy those committed to godliness.

I. The Intimidation of the World – 3:1-6

A. *THE IMPORTANCE OF THOSE OPPOSED TO GOD* – vv. 1-3

1. In response to Daniel’s interpretation of chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar - obviously enamored with his position at the head of the world’s great empires - decides to create a monument to portray his significance.
2. He *“made an image of gold, the height of which was sixty cubits and its width six cubits”* – making it 90 feet tall and 6 feet wide.¹
3. Next, Nebuchadnezzar *“sent word to assemble the [leading political personnel] to come to the dedication of the image ...”*
4. Consequently, they all *“were assembled for the dedication of the image ... and stood before the image ...”*
5. Imagine the intimidation of in the heart of the godly at seeing such an incredible array of dignitaries in all their splendor standing before a colossal image - all to the glory of man.

B. *THE INSISTENCE BY THOSE OPPOSED TO GOD* – vv. 4-6

1. However the intimidation of the world goes far beyond mere pageantry and fanfare, it includes verbal assault as well - *“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 [instruments], you are to fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up.’”*
2. As those opposed to God insist on allegiance to the dignity and deification of man, they threaten those who in any way object to it - *“But whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire.”*
3. This is consistent with the fact that those who are of the world are

¹ This is disproportionate to the image of a man and therefore most likely includes a base of approximately 20 feet tall - fitting a platform unearthed by Julius Oppert measuring 45 ft. square and 20 feet high six miles south of Babylon

intolerant of those who are godly - cp. [1 Peter 3:13-14](#); [4:1-6](#).

II. The Inducements of the World- [3:7-12a](#)

A. *THE DEMAND OF COMMON STANDARDS – v. 7*

1. There is incredible pressure imposed by what is called “peer pressure” to fall in line with what “everyone else is doing.” - cp. [Romans 12:1-2](#).
2. These Hebrews, desirous of faithfulness to God, look around them to see everyone yielding to the expression of allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar and his gods - *“Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the [instruments], all the peoples, nations and men of every language fell down and worshipped the golden image . . .”*
3. Without the impact of God’s Spirit, men are without direction and like dumb sheep, will follow one another whether they understand what is happening or not.
4. However, with the Spirit, we can discern right from wrong and must never allow ourselves to fall into the inducement of conformity because of pressure to abide by common standards.

B. *THE DISGUST FOR HIGHER STANDARDS – vv. 8-10*

1. The assumption is that whenever the mob exerts its pressure, all will fall in line. However, when someone aspires to a higher, biblical standard, bitter animosity is exerted to confront the effrontery to conventional godless “wisdom.”
2. *“The Chaldeans came forward and brought charges against the Jews [that they failed] . . . to fall down and worship the golden image.”*
3. Here again you see the world hating what is not its own. How complemented believers ought to be when they see their desire for distinction from the world honored by rejection from the world - cp. [Matthew 5:10-12](#).
4. Higher standards presented in God’s Word are clearly superior to the foolish standards of the world - [1 John 2:17](#).

C. *THE DURESS OF PERSONAL SAFETY – v. 11*

1. Another form of inducement to conform to the world is the issue of personal safety.
2. Sometimes, animosity goes beyond words of ridicule and extends to physical threat and genuine dangers.
3. These antagonists remind the King that *“whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a furnace of*

blazing fire.”

4. In the face of such intimidation, God encourages us not to fear those who can merely take our physical lives, but only Him who can condemn our souls - cp. [Matthew 10:28](#).
5. We are reminded that we will prevail over the in the end – cp. [1 John 4:4](#).

D. *THE DESIRE TO MAINTAIN STATUS – v. 12a*

1. final observation about the inducements that the world exerts to cause conformity is the threat of the loss of status.
2. *“There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon, namely Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego ...”*
3. These men stood there while all the other individuals bowed knowing that it could at the very least, cost them their positions (if the King were to be gracious enough to spare them.)
4. Their faithfulness to the Lord was all that mattered to them. Their offices of consequence were in the courts of heaven!

III. The Incrimination by the World – [3:12b](#)

A. *ACCUSATIONS OF DISREGARD FOR AUTHORITY*

1. The adversaries of the godly will often use several accusations in attempting to smear the righteous.
2. The first accusation mentioned here is a disregard for the human authority established by other men: *“These men, O king, have disregarded you;”*
3. They chide and accuse of the godly possessing pride in that they serve a higher master, believing that it is better to obey God rather than men - [Acts 5:29](#).

B. *ACCUSATIONS OF DISDAINFUL ATTITUDES*

1. A second accusation is found: *“... they do not serve your gods.”*
2. Here again, they assert that the righteous, god-fearing people are driven by a pride that causes them to think that they are better than others because they do not possess an allegiance to the same things as the world.

C. *ACCUSATIONS OF DEFIANT ALTERNATIVES*

1. Finally, the third accusation: *“... [they do not] worship the golden image which you have set up.”*
2. Here the righteous are slandered for having the nerve to believe that the practices of the world are inappropriate.

3. Such conspicuous rejection of normal practice causes the accusation once again of pride - "What gives you the right to determine what's right?"

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