

Daniel: Faith in the Fire

Daniel 3

October 22, 2023

There has been a two-week lapse since we last took a careful look at Daniel's story, but I hope you know by now that "in spite of present appearances, God is in control." Our text this week is the one that gives our sermon series its title and controlling metaphor. It's one of the most famous in Daniel and full of great challenges, even to us!

Group Sharing:

So far, what most stands out to you about the stories of Daniel?

We are coming to some stories that are pretty long, so carve out some time to read through the story of Daniel 3. If the story were a play, what would constitute its various scenes? What's the climax of the story?

What do you think motivated Nebuchadnezzar to create this massive statue? Why does he so adamantly insist everyone bow to it? There is probably no sure answer to these questions, but it was not out of the ordinary for people to be told to worship idols in the ancient Near East. Everyone did. What do you think of when you hear the word, *idolatry*? Read over Exodus 20:3-6. What is God's command regarding serving other gods and making idols?

We're not actually told what Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did when the musical instruments called everyone to bow, so how do we know they did not? Really think about their dilemma. They knew with certainty that their God prohibited idol worship, but couldn't they have just gone through the motions to save their skin? Even when the king summons them, they refuse to bow. What was it about bowing that caused them to risk their lives? What do you learn from the perspective they articulate in verses 17 & 18? Why aren't they certain that God will rescue them?

"The human heart is a perpetual idol factory."

John Calvin

The institutes of the Christian Religion

How is idolatry a threat to today's Christian? This, of course, begs a question: At its heart, what is idolatry? It may help to consider Paul's statement in Colossians 3:5 equating greed with idolatry. Think in terms of our human needs for security, acceptance, respect, meaning, significance. To what sorts of things do people often turn in order to find those? Where *do I turn* in order to find those? Daniel's three friends could have been easily lured into bowing before the statue. Why is it that idolatry becomes so alluring when we find ourselves in the fire?

"When we reach out to something else and ask or insist that it grant . . . basic meaning to our lives then we have created an idol."

Earl F. Palmer

Old Law, New Life

Prayerfully consider the following questions that may help us unearth our idols: If you're in the fire, who/what are you most drawn to rely on other than directly on God? "What comes to mind as you rise out of bed, and remains with you throughout the day?" What most motivates you to excel and do well? What other questions might you add to this?

Ask God for the strength to stand firm in the fire and repudiate the allure of idols.