

VII. Daniel in Biblical Perspective
Some Final Thoughts On The Fiery Furnace Incident
Daniel 3

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I would like to start this study with a word of prayer. *Father, thank You so much for these moments and these dear men and women reading this and the work of grace in their life. Your people have gathered to tell You how much they love You because You have brought them to Yourself out of the love of Christ. You have taught us in Your Word of Your salvation and our Savior. Now, Father, would You continue to teach us from that Word because that's how we might live unto Him, for Him, through Him and by Him. Thank You for this book of Daniel and its wonderful application to our lives in this day and era. Guide us as we continue our study in it. Give us a freshness, a heart of learning and a life that lives where we learn of You, I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.*

I want to ask your patience and forbearance for two reasons. I know I said last week that we would be moving into Daniel 4 which is a marvelous chapter but we're not and the reason for that is because it is such a marvelous chapter. Honestly when I was studying it I realized that two to three times we will have to go to Daniel 4. Given the fact that the Thanksgiving and Christmas season has come upon us and it would be interrupting our study of Daniel I really didn't want to start in Daniel 4 and have to pick it back up at the beginning of the year so we will start back with Daniel 4 after the advent season. During the advent season we will cover a very special series that the Lord has laid on my heart titled "Christmas, Why?" In doing so, I went back and searched some of my commentaries, the Scripture directly and some pastors I know and some things began to open up in Daniel 1, 2 and 3 that I didn't have time to deal with and I wanted to take this study to revisit Daniel 3 and come at it from a little bit different perspective than in the last study.

In the last study we were able to secure out of the Scripture an understanding of the response of Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abednego) to the call to bring worship, false worship and their refusal to do that, in a very Godly way, humble way and in a very bold way and their willingness to be cast into a fiery furnace. We saw their willingness to give of their lives with confidence that the Lord would deliver them whether from the furnace or not but He would deliver them from the hand of that king and He would sustain them. We also looked at Nebuchadnezzar's response to this witness that was there with them in the furnace.

Having looked at the response of Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abednego) and the response of Nebuchadnezzar we finally said, what is the response of God in this text? We find that God enters in and saves Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abednego) in such a way that He arrests the anger of Nebuchadnezzar and grabs his attention. But now I want you to come back with me to that text one more time. I want to take a look at basically five things from this text but before we do this I want to set it up again by reminding you why God laid on my heart to study the book of Daniel.

God laid on my heart Daniel for two reasons. One of the reasons was because all of us want to know where history is going and the book of Revelation that gives us

direction is based upon two books of the Old Testament directly which are Zechariah and Daniel. Therefore both of those are keys to understanding the book of Revelation, the scope of redemptive history, where it's going to end and how God's bringing all of this to fruition. But my bigger reason is Daniel, Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abednego) are presented to us without critique. It's interesting because there are two Old Testament men of God who really are not critiqued and they are not critiqued not because they are sinless but because they are living in certain situations and the purpose is not to critique their faltering. The purpose is to present to you how God used them in pagan, pluralistic societies. One man is Joseph and the other is Daniel.

Daniel is so honored in the Old Testament that he is even put in the pantheon of not only Joseph but along with Job and Noah which is astounding because those who put him in that pantheon are actually his contemporaries. Usually it takes years later for somebody to look back at someone and say, "What a Godly man!" But his own contemporaries like Ezekiel honored him as a wise man to learn from.

I want you to put yourself in the situation of Daniel 3 for a moment. In Daniel 3 we are into the captivity of the people of God who Nebuchadnezzar and the power of Babylon have conquered Jerusalem. They have pulled out exiles and brought many of the Jewish people into captivity. They did it three times. The first time they took about 10,000 that consisted of the professionals and leaders. They were young rulers. Nebuchadnezzar was going to use them by brainwashing them and training them so that he could use them to take care of this vassal state of Israel he had conquered. Nebuchadnezzar brings them up and begins the process of dealing with them. As he begins this they then in Daniel 1 stand for the Lord but realize what has happened here.

Here they were in a culture that was in our language "Bible friendly." This doesn't mean that Israel was by any means perfect but it was Bible friendly. There was the temple, the priesthood, the sacrifice, the ceremonial laws, and the traditions. To stand for the Lord in Israel was not all that difficult. It was culturally friendly. Now they are picked up and put into a pagan culture that is polytheistic, not monotheistic of one true and living God. That is the way those Empires operated back in those days. When they would conquer they would just let people keep their own gods and they thought all gods were okay because they could use religion to control people. So Babylon was no different. It was polytheistic. There were all kinds of gods. So here they are ripped out of a Bible friendly, culture friendly culture honoring the one true and living God and now placed in a culture that says any religion is okay (polytheism) and the way of life has nothing to do in terms of the morality of your religion where you can just live any way you want to which was the paganism of the day. Every man would do what was right in his own eyes and satisfy himself. So now they are in a hostile culture although professedly a tolerant culture (all religions tolerated).

Are you getting the transfer here for us? I meet Christians constantly who seem to be absolutely overwhelmed. I meet angry Christians. When I was kid growing up you didn't have to worry about Sundays or Wednesday nights and what you did. You could walk out and leave your house unlocked. The biggest problems in school was who had the spit wads not who had the machine guns. Look at this culture and what's happening. Now, we can't even pray in the schools or talk about the Lord. The power of the state is no longer protecting that Bible friendly culture. Now it attacks it. So what do we do? Do we dare to be a Daniel? I may not be meaning exactly what you think I'm meaning.

How is it that Daniel, Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abednego) respond to this? How do they live in this professing neutral, pluralistic, accepting of all religions culture, having left that Biblically friendly culture?

I'd like to go back through Daniel 3 to see if we can pick up a few thoughts. Daniel 3:1-7 says, *1 King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its breadth six cubits. (This is pretty close to what the Statue of Liberty looks like) He set it up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. (Was there ever another tower built in that area? It was the tower of Babel.) 2 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. 3 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. 4 And the herald proclaimed aloud, "You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, 5 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. 6 And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace." 7 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.*

Here is the first thing. Why this golden image? I think the answer is kind of two fold for us immediately. First, do you remember Daniel 2? Daniel 2 was about the dream Nebuchadnezzar had. He couldn't remember the dream and didn't know its interpretation. Daniel was the one who stepped up to give the dream and the interpretation. What was the dream? It was a large image that he saw. The head was gold. The next part of the body was silver. The next part was bronze. Then the next part was iron and then the bottom of the body was clay and iron with ten toes of clay and iron. And from a mountain came a stone and that stone hit that image and destroyed it. We studied that and we found out that the image represented the history of the kingdoms of this world that raised themselves up against God. The gold represented Assyria. Silver represented the Medo-Persia. The bronze represented Greece. The iron represented Rome and then it devolves further into iron and clay. We saw that the value and the strength were descending.

I know everybody studies that image and with all the books that are written about it everything seems to focus upon trying to figure out the ten toes. There may be something to figure out there but that's beyond my pay grade. I'm just a pretty obvious guy. I think what that is saying to us is that the image the king has seen is top heavy and will ultimately and easily be destroyed as everything we raise up against the Lord, and that it can't stand. Nebuchadnezzar looks at that and where is he? He is at the top and it's golden. So we move from Daniel 2 to Daniel 3 and what does he do in Daniel 3? Nebuchadnezzar takes that golden head and makes a golden image that is fully gold and he now makes a statement about himself and his power. He says, "Come and worship it." Notice how he doesn't name this golden image. He doesn't call it a god. He doesn't

erect this and says “This alone you must worship.” He simply says, “All of the peoples and their leaders must worship this image. You must bow down to it.”

How do you hold together this multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious empire? It has to have some glue. It has to have a bond. So what is it? It is the ascendancy and the power of those who are in power and the state. That image is not a new religion. That image is the supremacy of Nebuchadnezzar and the state and that he will stand. He will not be thrown down. You may all have your private religions but you will all bring your religion and bow down to the supremacy of the one in power and the state. That is where that golden image comes from. It comes from Daniel 2 and it’s raised up by Nebuchadnezzar. He doesn’t name it as a god but it is continually referred to as “your image” Nebuchadnezzar. It is the image that YOU, Nebuchadnezzar have established. People are to come, bow and worship to the image YOU have established. Why has this happened?

This brings me to a second thing. The first was why the golden image? The second is why the issue of worship? Why is worship inevitably the issue of life? Someone asked me the other day, “Harry, do you all at Briarwood ever go through the worship wars?” I said, “Well, I would rather not talk about that.” Whatever the worship wars are, there has always been a war as to who men and women will worship. The fact that Satan has been able to work his way into the present day contemporary church and bring worship wars within the church, is just one more statement of what he is constantly done. He does not want worship to be given to the One true and living God. In any way that he can stop it, outside or inside of the church, there has always been a war about worship.

Nebuchadnezzar’s response to the dream and its interpretation is there is no stone that’s going to strike this image for I will build an image that stands pure and stable and it is Babylon and the state that I set up and you will all come to worship it. Now in Romans 1 we are taken through a frightening statement that is given with the phrase “God gave them over.” Romans 1:18-25 says, **18** *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19* *For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20* *For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 21* *For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22* *Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23* *and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. 24* *Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25* *because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.*

The religions of this age and the “pluralistic” secular societies that say all religions are to be tolerant actually stand as a statement to something that is unassailably intolerant. That is, they war against the worship of the true and living God. Isn’t it interesting? Here we are in a chapter in which there is an empire that says all religions are valid. Now to bring some glue to hold this society together, here is the image that I, Nebuchadnezzar, have set up and by the way you can keep your other religious ways.

Here is seemingly “religious” tolerant, pluralistic, polytheistic society. We’re a secular society that says all religions are level and you may have your own religion but amazingly when you peel it back we find out that it is not tolerant at all of those who will not bow to the supremacy of the image of Nebuchadnezzar. If you don’t worship this image we won’t tolerate that. We will kill you.

The notion is that Christianity says there is One true and living God and that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life. There is one Lord, one faith and one baptism. Therefore Christianity must be terribly intolerant. Then actually when you peel it back you find out that it’s very tolerant in that it doesn’t say that everything people say is right but it does say that man is made in the image of God and you have a right to believe what you want to. We will affirm that you have the dignity and right to believe that but here we want to persuade you of that which we know is the Truth that is revealed in the Word of God. We don’t bring you by coercion that if you don’t bow to Jesus we throw you in a fiery furnace but we bring you with the cords of love, persuasion, grace and mercy. That is how we’ll bring you. So here, seemingly, is this pluralistic, secular society that is unabashedly intolerant of those who will not bow the knee to this image.

Here is Daniel, Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abednego) unbelievably gracious and kind. They are in the ruling class but they don’t try to seek power to make people to bow to Jehovah but they do with their lives and their lips draw people to that living God that they might bow to Him. Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abednego) don’t become arrogant and declare themselves in power to try to coerce people but they simply live graciously, boldly and courageously to draw and call men and women to the One true and living God. The man that is over the state that says you may have any religion you want to privately but publically you will bow to what I have stated, to this image and to the state and if you don’t you will die. So who are the patient and the tolerant? Which ones are affirming the dignity of what men and women are called to do and that is to freely worship the One true and living God?

Not only is worship the issue because we will worship but the questions are who will we worship and will we worship acceptably to the living God? Here, you may worship who you want to on this day, and that place and in your home but publically and in the public square you bow to the dictate of the state and the state is raised up as supreme. Now, let’s take a closer look at the three men, Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abednego).

Daniel 3:8-15 says, **8** *Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews. 9 They declared to King Nebuchadnezzar, “O king, live forever! 10 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. 11 And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace. 12 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.” 13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king. 14 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? 15 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. (Here is the statement of supremacy.) And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?"

Do you remember that dream? Nebuchadnezzar doesn't quite get it yet, does he? The king says, "I will reign supreme and my supremacy will be acknowledged by you bowing to the image that I have set up and if you do not then I will cast you into a burning fiery furnace and who will possibly deliver you from my hands?" Look at what the three men say. Daniel 3:16-18 says, **16** *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17 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. 18 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."*

Here are these three young men who have had a great testimony set before them in Daniel who now began to respond the same way. Please notice that the king had called everyone to worship this golden image and they had not made a big scene out of it where they called a press conference. They had not made a big deal of who they were. They had not used their power to stop people. They were in the ruling class. They were apart of the satraps and the wise men but they had not used that to coerce people nor had they drawn attention to themselves. They just did not show up. They did not come and worship the image.

Then when Nebuchadnezzar comes to them their response is "We don't need to answer to you" and that could sound like they are being arrogant but that's not really the purpose. They are just simply saying, "Nebuchadnezzar, this is a matter of our heart before God. We'll be glad to persuade you and talk with you but we don't need to answer you. We need to answer to the One true and living God in terms of worship. We will worship only Him. We will not worship your image or your gods." So they don't flaunt and they're not arrogant. They are confident but not defensive. They don't seek power or inappropriately use their position. They don't make a big deal about themselves. But what they are, unlike Nebuchadnezzar, patient, persuasive and they live what they believe. Then they confess what they believe and in whom they believe and they make it as clear as they can before Him. They do not have the arrogance that I hear many of us use in life, witness and prayer that I believe in well meaning motivation we pass off as faith.

The other week I prayed with someone who was ill along with about 7 or 8 other people. When I left I had someone take me aside to rebuke me. They said, "If I had known the way you were going to pray I would have told them not to invite you because you don't really believe God can heal." I said, "Why would you say that?" They said, "We heard you pray. You said, 'God we know you have the power to heal and we ask you to heal them and here are the reasons why this is what we would like for You to do' but then you said, 'but if You choose to do something else' that really reveals that you don't believe, that means you doubt." I said, "Oh no, dear friend, I will accept everything that you say to me but I will keep praying that way and here is my reason why. I don't believe faith calls me to impose upon God my agenda. Faith calls me to communicate to

God my heart and then to rest in His agenda because He does all things well. His ways may not be my ways but they are the right ways.”

While I am gloriously grateful that some how God supernaturally has entwined the prayers of His people with the providence of His actions, therefore I pray with all my fervor believing in Him but I will not extend myself beyond my Savior who said, “If there be any way let this cup pass from Me yet not My will be done but Your will be done.” I will rest in His will. My faith is not the arrogance that my agenda must be imposed upon God but my faith is that my God is able. But if He decides not to answer the way I have prayed, I know He will deliver His people, in His way, in His time and it is that that I’m assured of. That’s what we see in Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abednego) which they have already picked up from Daniel in Daniel 1 and 2. They exhibit that same confidence in the Lord that same desire to see the Lord’s will done. Now let’s take a closer look at Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel 3:19-23 says, **19** *Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed (He got so mad, he got ugly in the face as my daughter would say.) against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated. 20 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. 21 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. 22 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. 23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace.*

I pointed out in the last study how nonsensical this was. If you were really mad at Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abednego) why did you heat the thing up? Why not slow it down and let it simmer a little bit and make them suffer? All he did was lose a couple of war heroes because they got burned up since the furnace was so hot. Have you ever noticed how the anger of man really doesn’t make sense? Anger is an appropriate emotion when rightly used in the right place but the Bible says, “Be angry but don’t sin.” So here we see how Nebuchadnezzar’s anger takes hold of him but that’s not all that happens.

Daniel 3:24-30 says, **24** *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.” 25 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.” 26 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. 27 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. (That’s a miracle right there. They could not even smell the smoke. This is true, supernatural intervention of God’s hand) 28 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. 29 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.” 30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

So let's take a little bit closer look at the king now. The king looks into the furnace and his anger dissipates because he sees something that astonishes him. He rises up in haste and he calls all his wise men, satraps and officials together and says, “Didn't I cast three men into the fire?” They said, “Oh yes king, that's what you did.” The king says, “I see four.” I can almost hear the mumbling that went on after he said that saying, “I see four too.” Look, they are just walking around and one looks like the son of the gods. That is just the language of a pagan saying, “I see someone who cannot be explained, who is supernatural. I see someone that is astonishing, like the son of the gods.” Then he brings the men out of the furnace and the king declares, “Your God is the Most High God.” A couple of things are happening here with Nebuchadnezzar.

God is doing a work in Nebuchadnezzar. We saw that work back in Daniel 1 when he saw that Daniel, Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abednego) and their obedience to the Lord had risen above everybody else in his training program. So the king raised them up and put them in positions of leadership. By the way, this is how Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abednego) pick up on this. Daniel does not use his ability to interpret a dream to promote himself or to get a higher position. He says, “O king, none of your wise men, none of your satraps, none of those people can know the dream or interpret the dream” but if I was Daniel I probably would have said next “but I can.” However that's not what Daniel said. He said, “There's a God who reveals and it is not in me but it is of Him. There is a God who reveals the secrets of men.” Again Nebuchadnezzar is arrested and now we are in Daniel 3. He is not converted yet but he's arrested.

How do I know he's not converted? The king said in Daniel 3:26, “You're God is the Most High God” so he is starting to get it. But notice he doesn't say, “You're God is my God, the God of Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abednego).” The king has seen power and that is what he has respected. He is responding to it but I know he is not converted yet. I know that he is not converted yet because he does it all over again. He now takes the golden image down in his mind and he puts the God of Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abednego) in front by saying, “If you don't bow down to this God then I will tear you from limb to limb.” So he shifts his intolerance to the use of power to coerce for the God of Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abednego).

I know a lot of Christians that really think that's great. That's not great. We don't look for a government to coerce the worship of our God. The government just protects the rights of people to worship. Nebuchadnezzar is still not there yet. He will get there after Christmas when we get to Daniel 4 and you will see it by his response but let me just share with you one final point, a closer thought.

There is something else the king has seen and I believe this is what is working on him. When he looks in the fire he sees a Christophany. Now, granted there are some arguments among Bible commentators that this may simply be an angel and it may be but as I said in the last study I believe this is a Christophany. I believe this is one of those

special moments like when Joshua met the captain of the Lord of Hosts or when Moses met The Angel of the Lord. This is a pre-incarnate ministry of Christ in the Old Testament. This is the second Person of the Trinity. That is the One who has come into the furnace and it is that that the king sees. He sees not only three Jewish men in the furnace but he sees the second Person of the Trinity who has gone into the furnace with them and for them. Does this sound familiar where Jewish men are thrown into furnaces? Not much has changed has it? None of Nebuchadnezzar's religions have this. All of his religions claim power but no religion in this world that man makes reveals the God of glory, who not only has power to deliver you from a furnace but He loves you enough to go into the furnace.

It's not accident that Jesus in Matthew 13 where it talks about the end of the days says there are two destinations. There is a heaven to enter and there's a hell to shun. In Matthew 13 what does He call that hell? He calls it a fiery furnace. Jesus Christ came into this world and on the cross He entered into that fiery furnace. He descended into hell and paid for your sins and mine. That is the God who has gone into that furnace for us but not only did Jesus come 2000 years ago to go into that furnace, bear that hell that we might be delivered from our sins so that we don't have to go to that furnace, but we can go to everlasting life, but this same Jesus in your life, when you face the furnaces will go into the furnaces of life with you.

Sometimes He'll quench of the fire and take you out of the furnace but notice He doesn't do that here. Could Jesus have just put the fire out or beamed them up to heaven providentially or miraculously? Absolutely, but He didn't take them out of that fire. He went into that fire with them and that's what He does with me and you. He went into the fire to save us from the furnace of the fire of hell that we might enjoy Him forever. And the same God who went into the furnace of fire for us, is the same God who everyday will go into the fiery furnaces in this world with us to deliver us. That is what is starting to get the attention of Nebuchadnezzar. We think that what will astound the world is the power of our Savior and it is astounding but what astounds the world and what they need to hear is that we have a Savior who went to the cross for you and a Savior who walks through life with you.

Periodically, He will douse the fire. Periodically, He will just pull you out of it but basically in life, in this broken world, the One who rescued from the eternal condemnation of the fire of hell, is the One who will walk through the fiery furnaces of this world with you and never leave you nor forsake you. Whether it's the challenge of economics or whatever it is, do you see why I said "Dare to be a Daniel"? It is not to be arrogant, calling down power but in the power of the Savior showing the confidence, calmness, patience and persuasiveness of a life that lives and a life that confesses "Our God has delivered us and our God will deliver us. Come to this God that He might be yours, this Son of God who has come for you." Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together and to visit this marvelous Book. Would You impress Your Word upon us? Father, we live in an age that increasingly is hostile but we live not with hostility but with confidence in the love of Christ. We would dare to be Daniels, Shadrachs, Meshachs, and Abednegos. We will not be Nebuchadnezzars who seek power to coerce. We seek to be positioned, to live, influence

and show others that Jesus Christ is not a god like the other gods who are no gods, but He is the God of glory who has entered into this world in humiliation and suffering to a cross and into hell that we might be saved and He will walk every step of the way with us to glory. Father, we thank You for Him, our Redeemer, who delivers us, in Jesus' Name, Amen.