

Setting the Stage

The over-arching theme continues BEING FAITHFUL TO GOD IN A FOREIGN LAND

The Gathering

Daniel 3:1 (The Message): King Nebuchadnezzar **built a gold statue, ninety feet high and nine feet thick**. He set it up on the Dura plain in the province of Babylon.

Daniel 3:2 (The Message): He then ordered **all** the important leaders in the province, everybody who was anybody, to the dedication ceremony of the statue.

- “all” – includes Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

Daniel 3:3–6 (The Message): They all came for the dedication, all the important people, and took their places before the statue that Nebuchadnezzar had erected. 4 A herald then proclaimed in a loud voice: “Attention, everyone! Every race, color, and creed, listen! 5 When you hear the band strike up—all the trumpets and trombones, the tubas and baritones, the drums and cymbals—fall to your knees and worship the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. 6 Anyone who does not kneel and worship shall be thrown immediately into a roaring furnace.”

Pause: Do you take a knee?

The Accusation

Daniel 3:11–12 (The Message): and whoever did not go to their knees and worship it had to be pitched into a roaring furnace.

12 Well, there are some Jews here—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—whom you have placed in high positions in the province of Babylon. These men are ignoring you, O king. They don’t respect your gods and they won’t worship the gold statue you set up.”

The Faith of the Accused

So when the king finds out these boys didn’t bow, he’s FURIOUS. He brings the boys into a meeting and gives them a second chance. “Alright, when you hear the music and you’re ready go ahead and bow down and worship. But if you don’t worship, you will immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace.” Had he stopped here, it probably wouldn’t have been so bad. But instead he continues and then he personalizes it, “And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?” If there’s one thing I’ve learned from reading my Bible, it’s don’t call God out like that because he will humble you. That’s exactly what is going to happen, but not before the three boys give the most profound three sentences in this chapter.

They tell him,

“...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.**”

Take note here, God’s people need to be able to recognize what are open handed issues and what are closed handed issues. Back in chapter 1 the boys said, “Okay, we’ll dress the way you want us to dress. We’ll learn what you want us to learn. But we will NOT defile ourselves by putting unclean food into our bodies.” They knew the culture was open and the food was closed and were willing to put their foot down. In this story they were willing to serve in government and do their duties, but they were not willing to bow down and worship idols or false gods. They knew what was open, what was closed, and were not willing to do things that were dishonoring to God.

The Deliverance

Long story short – Into the Fire they go – they don’t die, all though some did throwing them in
But these boys have Fire Retardant – and his name is Jesus

Daniel 3:24–26 (The Message): Suddenly King Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in alarm and said, “Didn’t we throw three men, bound hand and foot, into the fire?” “That’s right, O king,” they said. 25 “But look!” he said. “I see four men, walking around freely in the fire, completely unharmed! And ***the fourth man looks like a son of the gods!***” 26 Nebuchadnezzar went to the door of the roaring furnace and called in, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, **servants of the High God**, come out here!” Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego walked out of the fire.

Daniel 3:27–28 (The Message): All the important people, the government leaders and king’s counselors, gathered around to examine them and discovered that the fire hadn’t so much as touched the three men—not a hair singed, not a scorch mark on their clothes, not even the smell of fire on them! 28 Nebuchadnezzar said, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent his angel and rescued his servants who trusted in him! They ignored the king’s orders and laid their bodies on the line rather than serve or worship any god but their own. 29 “Therefore I issue this decree: Anyone anywhere, of any race, color, or creed, who says anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego will be ripped to pieces, limb from limb, and their houses torn down. There has never been a god who can pull off a rescue like this.” 30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

LESSONS

1. There are idols that slip their way into our lives and we aren’t even aware of it. **So what do you do?** You have to honestly assess your life. Go to God in prayer and ask him to reveal anything in your life that you are elevating above him, and ask that his Holy Spirit would take away your desires for that idol, for that thing that you elevate above him. **We are made to worship, it’s just sometimes we worship the wrong thing.** But with that, you have friends and family who have not given their lives to God. For them, they are facing death. It’s a spiritual death, an eternal separation from God. BUT HERE’S THE THING, **God has purposefully, and intentionally placed those people in YOUR LIFE so that YOU can share the good news of Jesus with them.** YOU are the one that he is going to use to proclaim his gospel, and when I say that I don’t mean invite them to church! Somewhere along the way we have confused sharing the gospel with inviting others to church. That’s not sharing the gospel. I mean VERBALLY share the gospel! Tell them who God is, his love for them, what Jesus did on the cross, and how they can freely have eternal life in him. How are they supposed to believe without hearing?
2. Do you trust that God is good, EVEN IF he doesn’t show up in the way you want him to? The boys knew God was ABLE to rescue them, but they didn’t know IF he’d rescue them. But their actions were not dependent upon whether or not God would save them. They were devoted to God, they were loyal to God. They knew what was pleasing and honoring to God. And they knew that if they bowed down and worshiped that statue then they would be turning their back on the One they loved with all their being. It can be intimidating to read these stories because the honest truth is that more often than not, we’re not this strong in our faith. But I don’t believe this story was recorded in history in order to guilt us, I believe it was recorded to encourage us to have the boldness to say, “I know God can _____, but even if he doesn’t he is still good. He is still God. My trust and my love are not dependent on him delivering me from my fiery furnace.” It can be difficult to get there in your trust with God. **You can’t do it alone.** These boys didn’t do it alone. They stood together in rebellion to the king. It is so important for you to be connected, much more than just 90 minutes on a Sunday morning. **You need a small group of believers** who you can confide in, who will encourage you and pray with you. Who you can turn to when things get difficult.
3. Lastly, I just want to remind us of something Jesus said back in Matthew 10. He’s sending out the 12 apostles and he’s warning them that persecution WILL come. He tells them in verse 32 and 33: “So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.”

The boys acknowledged God before King Nebuchadnezzar, whether or not God was going to deliver them. Let us always acknowledge God before men, no matter the consequences. P When you’re faced with cultural norms

that clash with closed-handed items, stick to your convictions and choose to honor God. And when people ask you why you're different, don't be afraid to say it's because of Jesus.

It may just open a conversation that opens someone's heart to the gospel.

Acknowledge God before men, and Jesus will acknowledge you before the Father.