

Living Faithfully in Babylon

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Daniel 3:1-30
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So today as we continue in our series, I want to invite and encourage you now to open your Bibles with me to the Book of Daniel chapter 3, and what we're going to see today through Daniel 3 is what it looks like to be living faithfully in Babylon. While you're turning to Daniel 3, I want to take just a few minutes to help us understand something about the framework of God's redemptive plan specifically in the Book of Daniel. It actually begins all the way back in Genesis chapter 9. I know what you're thinking, "Kevin, we know you want to keep going through Genesis, but we are in Daniel." I get it, but just bear with me because after the global flood and God's rescue of his people through the ark, the Lord made a covenant with Noah and the Lord commanded Noah and his descendants, like a new creation mandate, to be fruitful and to multiply and to fill the earth.

However, just one chapter later in Genesis 10, we are introduced to the great-grandchild of Noah whose name is Nimrod and the name Nimrod means let us rebel. The text of Genesis tells us that Nimrod was the first on earth to be a mighty man. So he was the strongest, most powerful warrior who ever lived up to that point in human history. In fact, the text goes on to say that he was a mighty hunter before the Lord. The problem, however, is that that description is not a compliment. The idea is that he was a rebel in the sight of God who hunted not animals, but human beings. Nimrod was a warrior in the sense that he was ruthless in dominating people and he was willing to do anything necessary to subjugate and bring people into submission to his commands.

Although God had emphasized to Noah and his sons in the Noahic covenant the vital importance of valuing the sanctity of human life, within just two generations, which is a demonstration of man's sinfulness, one of Ham's grandsons is capturing and slaving and murdering people all in an effort to build up his own kingdom. One of the kingdoms that Nimrod established was Babel, which means confused noise. So what happened at Babel? Well, in defiance of the Lord's command, instead of spreading out among the earth, Nimrod sought to unify his followers into one place. Genesis 11 tells us that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. Then they made bricks with an oven and began building a tower that stretched into the heavens. Instead of making God's name great among the nations, they set out to build a tower in order to make a name for themselves.

So in response, God confused their language, halted the building's progress, and dispersed them into many nations throughout the world. Later in Genesis 12, God chooses a man from among those nations whom he will call Abraham and he promises Abraham to bless him and to give him a land and to give him a people, and those people would become the Israelites.

So fast forwarding then to the Book of Daniel, as God judges Judah for their sin against him, who does he use? Well, he raises up a nation called Babylon, which is led by a king named Nebuchadnezzar. In chapter 1:2 of Daniel, it tells us there that the Lord gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into Nebuchadnezzar's hand with some of the vessels of the house of God and he brought them to the land of Shinar, the same land of Shinar from Genesis chapter 11, because Babel is Babylon. Therefore, what's important for us to realize as we begin today is that when Judah was judged and exiled to Babylon, it was the Lord taking them from the land of promise they had been given back to Babel, to the land of confusion and to the city of rebellion.

Therefore, not only was Babylon a geographical location located in modern day Iraq, but in scripture, Babylon also personifies the kingdom of this world. In many ways, it's every nation that shakes its fist angrily at God in pride, rebellion, and immorality. Every nation that sacrifices its children on the altar of Marduk or convenience and commits perpetual idolatry is like a modern-day Babylon, and therefore, recognizing the current state and potential trajectory of our own nation, it is crucial for us to understand what it means to live faithfully in Babylon.

So with that as a framework, we're now ready to begin walking our way through this 3rd chapter of Daniel. So I'd like to ask for those who are able that you will now with me for the reading of God's Word. We're just going to read the crescendo of the chapter as we begin, which is found in verses 16 through 18, and it's there that God's Word reads: "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.'" With that, you can be seated as we pray together.

Father, we come to you today asking that you'll be with us in a special way. Please give me clarity of speech, oh God, to proclaim your Word. Give us spiritual ears to hear your Word, minds to understand your Word, hearts that love your Word, and a will to obey your Word. I ask, Lord, that you be glorified through the proclamation of your Word in both its preaching and its hearing. Help us, oh God, to honor you. May you be pleased with our worship through your Word today, and please, oh God, be with us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Well, in the year 1555, two reformers named Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley were arrested. The Queen at that time was Mary I, or Bloody Mary as she's often known, and as the daughter of Henry VIII, she made it the goal of her monarchy to restore England's relationship with the Roman Catholic Church. During her bloody reign, 288 protestant reformers would be burned at the stake. Two of them were Ridley and Latimer. These men refused to honor the Pope or embrace the Catholic mass and Bloody Mary was going to make them pay. So with a large crowd gathered around them, some weeping while others taunted and laughed, the stake was ignited. As the flames began to engulf the stake, it is recorded that Latimer cried out to Ridley with a loud voice saying, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day, by God's grace, light such a candle in England, as I trust, will never be put out."

Although on that day the Lord did not choose to spare Latimer and Ridley from their fiery execution, not only did the flame of the gospel spread throughout England and beyond, but to this very day, we look back to their lives as an example of what faithfulness to the Lord looks like even when it costs us everything. We see another example of that in our text for today.

So with that in mind, look with me beginning in verse 1. We'll start by reading through verse 3, and as we do, the first thing I want us to see from our text today is that as believers, ***We will be Confronted by the Idols of Babylon. We will be Confronted by the Idols of Babylon.*** It says there, "King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold whose height was 60 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."

So although we do not know how much time has transpired from Daniel chapter 2 to Daniel chapter 3, you'll recall, if you were here last week, that Nebuchadnezzar had a dream. In that dream, which Daniel, by God's grace, was able to interpret for him, there was a massive statue in fact, and the head of that statue, which represented Nebuchadnezzar and the kingdom of Babylon, was composed of gold. So here in chapter 3, what do we find Nebuchadnezzar doing? Well, in some respects, it seems that he's trying to bring his dream to life. But instead of including any of the other types of metals, which represented subsequent inferior kingdoms, Nebuchadnezzar has the entire statue made of gold. This is a massive statue as well, 60 cubits by six cubits. So we're talking about 90 feet high with about a nine-foot breadth.

So what is Nebuchadnezzar doing here? Well, I believe his goal in erecting this statue is far more wicked and rebellious than we can even recognize on face value. The reason I say that is because in the mid-19th century, a man named Sir Henry Rawlinson made a very interesting discovery in what was formerly Babylon, and what he discovered were the remnants of a heavily damaged tower, but it was a tower that had been repaired during the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar and inserted into the walls of that damaged tower were the cylinders containing parallel inscriptions.

So after translating the inscriptions, here's what they determined the words to read, "I am Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. My great lord Marduk has established me in strength and has urged me to repair his buildings. The Tower of Babylon I have made and finished. The Tower of Borsippa had been built by a former king. He had completed 42 cubits, but he did not finish its head. From the lapse of time, it had become ruined. The rain and wet had penetrated into the brickwork. The casing of burnt brick had bulged out. Marduk," false god, "my great lord inclined my heart to repair the building. I did not change its sight, nor did I destroy its foundation platform. But in a fortunate month and upon a favorable day, I undertook the rebuilding. I set my

hand to build it up and to finish its summit. As it had been in ancient times, so I built up its structure."

So interestingly, Nebuchadnezzar calls this tower that a previous king was for some reason unable to finish Borsippa Tower, which literally means tongue tower. So I believe that the statue we see in our text could very well be Nebuchadnezzar's completion of the Tower of Babel. The Lord, of course, had halted the building's completion when he confused their language. So as the inscription read, it was missing its head or its top. But in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, remember, who represented the head of gold? He did. So it is at least plausible then that Nebuchadnezzar seeking his own glory and praise and adoration sought to repair, renovate, and complete the legendary Tower of Babel. So he set up a brick oven to have the brickwork fixed and added to, and then he built upon the original tower's structure completing it with a 90-foot golden statue of either himself or the false god Marduk.

Why would he do that? Well, although he heard and paid outward lip service to the Word of God spoken by Daniel back in chapter 2, he refused to believe it. In contrast to Daniel's confession that the one true and living God sets up and removes kings, Nebuchadnezzar, a human king, arrogantly believes that he can set up gods. Following in the footsteps of the notorious King Nimrod before him, King Nebuchadnezzar is attempting to defiantly prove the dream and therein God wrong. Like the purpose of the original Tower of Babel, Nebuchadnezzar completes and adds to this tower with his own golden statue in order to defiantly make a name for himself to exalt and extend his own glory. But also like the original Tower of Babel, Nebuchadnezzar is attempting to unify the people of his kingdom.

This is why in our text we see this grand display of dignitaries and positions of esteem represented at the dedication ceremony. Each of these titles that we see listed in verses 2 and 3 and then repeated again and again from the satraps down to the officials of the provinces in descending order are the most powerful and prestigious political positions throughout the Babylonian empire. So Nebuchadnezzar is attempting to solidify and assert total dominance and demand absolute obedience from every realm of his vast kingdom.

In fact, to see that more clearly and to add to the Tower of Babel parallels, look with me at verses 4-7. It says there, "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."

So in the midst of all the pomp and circumstance, what we realize is that this is not just a political ceremony, this is a worship service. Nebuchadnezzar has assembled the most influential individuals from every nation and language of his kingdom to demand their worship. In fact, even the instruments, each have different origins throughout this kingdom. Therefore, while the

symphony of instruments representing the collective sound of the nation's begins to play, every person in attendance is commanded to fall down on their face and worship this image. If they do not, then there is a fiery furnace waiting to consume them. The same brick oven that was used to build the blasphemous image is now prepared to destroy every defiant subject.

Although most of us know this account pretty well, the text is intended here as if we were reading it for the very first time to cause us great suspense. We should be holding our breath as we read the words, "All the people worship the golden image." What should be welling up within us is this kind of righteous indignation, the desire to yell out, "No, don't worship that idol." In the midst of that holy outrage, however, the text also functions for us as a kind of mirror, allowing us to see ourselves in the multitude, and confronting us with the question today, how would you respond? Confronted by the pressure from political authority and societal conformity and threatened with your very life, how would you respond? Would you fall down and worship the image to save your life? Or would you refuse even if it costs you your life?

You see, this is a question at its very heart of worship and the motivation for our worship, and it forces us to ask ourselves the question, do we truly desire to worship the one true and living God no matter what? Or do we only worship him when it is convenient? Although you and I, at this point in American history, thankfully are not faced with the choice of either committing idolatry or choosing death, what we are confronted with every single day of our lives is the temptation to compromise, to compromise on biblical ethics and moral standards. Today we are confronted by the far more subtle idols like money, popularity, career, and sex. So no, you may not be tempted to bow down to a golden image, but what about bowing down to the images on your smartphone?

As we contemplate those questions of worship today, it leads us to the next thing I want us to see from our text, which is that ***We must not Compromise on the Worship of our God.*** Look with me at verses 8-12, "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.'"

So on the one hand, we are provided here with a kind of sigh of relief that there are actually faithful men in this multitude who refuse to bow down to the idolatrous worship of this golden image. Yet on the other hand, as the tension of our text begins to grow, we also find that there are some exceedingly unfaithful men in this multitude as well, men who want to see these three Jewish men obliterated, destroyed. In fact, in the original language, the word for maliciously accused in the ESV is actually an Aramaic idiom that literally means to bite into and devour. So these men want nothing more than to tear these Jews apart and why would they want to do that?

What's driving them? Well, as believers, of course, we face hostility and antagonism in this world. As Jesus said, "If the world hates you, remember that it hated me first."

But what is it that drives that hatred and that antagonism? Well, first and foremost, it's simply righteousness. Like Cain killing Abel, he did so because his own works were evil, the Bible tells us, but his brothers were righteous. The children of the devil hate the children of God. That's true all the time. But our text actually provides us with another clue when we focus in on the term Chaldeans. If you remember from back in chapter 2, who was it that initially responded to King Nebuchadnezzar concerning his dreams? It was the Chaldeans, which is another term for astrologers.

So back in chapter 2:10-11, it said this, "The Chaldeans," or astrologers, "answered the king and said, 'There is not a man on earth who can meet the king's demand for no great and powerful king has asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or Chaldean. The thing that the king asks is difficult and no one can show it to the king except the gods whose dwelling is not with flesh,' and yet Daniel, as we know, with the Lord's help, was able to do exactly what they could not and therefore, he and his friends were rewarded with positions of power in Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom.

What we're seeing from these Chaldeans then is a jealousy-driven hatred. Somehow in the midst of the multitude, Nebuchadnezzar does not notice that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are not bowing down to the image he has erected. But these angry astrologers are going to make sure that it's brought to his attention. From their perspective, these Jewish foreigners have made them look stupid and have been given positions of power that belong to them. So this is a perfect opportunity, from their perspective, to get revenge and make them pay and potentially win back the positions that they desire.

Some, of course, have raised the question at this point, "Where is Daniel in all of this?" After all, he was the primary person that God used to answer the king. But if you remember from the very last verse of Daniel chapter 2, it told us there that Daniel made a request of the king and in response to his request, the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon, but Daniel remained at the king's court. So Daniel is back at the king's court taking care of things at home. He's not there. His friends, they are. Therefore, they become the targets of this Chaldean conspiracy and so motivated by hatred and animosity and selfish ambition, these men seek to flatter the king for the purpose of provoking him to anger.

It brings us to the next section of our text where I want us to see that as we seek to live faithful lives, ***We will be Challenged by the Pressures of Babylon. We will be Challenged by the Pressures of Babylon.*** If you look with me at verse 13, our text goes on to say, "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." Then he asks this question in verse 15, "And who is the God who will deliver you out of my hands?"

So whether it was because of the investment he had made in these men or perhaps some type of affection or fondness for them, Nebuchadnezzar does not immediately throw these three men into the furnace. Instead, he orchestrates for them a kind of, if you will, personal concert, one more last opportunity to declare their allegiance to him. In some ways, the tension of our text grows even more intense as the lives of these men hang in the balance. But at the same time, there is a sarcastic mockery found here as well. Why do I say that? Well, because both we and these Hebrews know that compared to the Lord our God, Nebuchadnezzar is an insignificant speck in human history. So in the midst of all this sinful sputtering anger, in the grand scheme of God's redemptive plan, he is nothing, but a helpless, powerless little man. This is almost comical; repetition of the instruments only adds to the ridiculousness of the situation.

It's sadly humorous to see Nebuchadnezzar think that he somehow controls the destiny of these men, which is epitomized by that question in verse 15, "Who is the God who will deliver you out of my hands?" So I think the audacity of that question is intended to drive home the point. God's Word wants us to recognize that once we are able to see through the facade of human intimidation, and we are reminded that it is God who is in control of our destiny than any so-called power or pressure that we experience in this life simply pales in comparison. As Jesus said in Matthew 10:28, "Do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell." So it's that reverent fear that drives Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to respond to the king and the way they do and we'll see that as we continue in our text.

So next, I want us to see that We Must Find Courage in the Power of our God. We Must Find Courage in the Power of our God. Look with me at verse 16, "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.'"

So notice with me that these three Jewish young men do two things simultaneously. They're loving and respectful while at the same time they maintain their conviction for the truth. They have both a spine and a heart. They know the first commandment, which is found in Exodus chapter 20 verses 3-5, the very beginning of what known as the 10 Commandments. The Lord said, "You shall have no other gods before me. 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."

My friends, it is possible to adamantly declare biblical truth while doing so in a loving, gentle, respectful manner. In fact, our Lord commands us to do so, to be a people of both grace and

truth, truth and love. So we see that with these three men. They show Nebuchadnezzar the utmost honor again and again repeatedly, O king, O king, O king. But at the same time, they are steadfastly committed to the worship of God even if it costs them their life. Now, they could have reason in their minds, as so many do today, that the end justifies the means, right? I mean, after all, if they would just compromise here in something as seemingly insignificant as the bowing of their bodies, but not their heart, then they could still be a benefit to their people back in Judah. God's placed them in these positions of power and authority. So this is really a minor thing. The end will justify this minor compromise, "What kind of help can we be if we lose our life and we're not here anymore?"

But I want us to recognize that that kind of pragmatic thinking is not the focus for these three men. Now, they make it clear that they have no idea whether God will actually save them from the fiery flames or not, but they have absolute confidence in his power to do so. So they do not doubt his sovereign power, but they also do not presume upon his sovereign plans and purposes. So rather than placing their hope and physical deliverance, they have their hearts focused on obedience, "We will obey God and we will trust him with the outcome." That's the idea and brothers and sisters, regardless of the situation, that must be our mindset and attitude as well. We will seek, in all things, to obey our God. In those areas where our government or other earthly authorities command us to sin or violate scripture, we will exercise peaceful disobedience. We will not disobey our Lord neither for the opportunity of worldly advancement, nor for fear of worldly punishment. We will not manipulate situations or capitulate to unbiblical commands. We will obey God and let God handle the results. Amen.

For Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, we see the result of their response, at least in the immediate sense. So picking up the narrative in verse 19, the next thing I want us to see is that more often than not, *We will be Condemned by the Unrighteous of Babylon*. Look with me at verse 19, "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." Once again, an Aramaic idiom this time meaning as hot as it will go. "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 into bound the burning fiery furnace."

So the tension of our text here, as we have been following that along, has now reached its boiling point. The furious wrath of Nebuchadnezzar is exemplified in the details of our text. The furious wrath here of the fiery furnace is heated to its highest temperature, which is probably around 1,800 degrees Fahrenheit. The mightiest men of the army are chosen to rapidly bind these three Jewish men. They aren't even given a chance to be stripped of their hats or outer garments. Nebuchadnezzar wants them thrown into the furnace now. Yet because the flames are so intense,

even on the outside of the furnace, it instantly kills these mighty military men and so with all hope of physical deliverance seemingly extinguished, the next section of our text comes to us almost leaping from the page.

So continuing to verses 24-27, the next thing I want us to see is that we must remain confident in the salvation of our God. So like hope rising from the ashes, our text continues in verse 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.' 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.' And 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."

So shocked from his seat of satisfaction, Nebuchadnezzar leaps to his feet in sheer amazement and in complete disbelief at what he is seeing, he seeks a second opinion. Are you seeing what I'm seeing? Not only are these three Hebrew men unbound, unharmed, and unhindered walking around in the heart of this fiery furnace, but there is now a fourth man in that furnace who was not with them before. This man, according to Nebuchadnezzar, looks like a son of the gods, from his perspective. He looks divine. So in direct response to that mocking question that Nebuchadnezzar asked earlier in our passage, "Who is the God who will deliver you from my hands?" The one true and living God comes to personally provide the answer.

Brothers and sisters, I believe that this is none other than the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ, the same pre-incarnate Christ who wrestled with Jacob until the break of day, the same pre-incarnate Christ who appeared to Abraham, the same pre-incarnate Christ who met Joshua on the road to Jericho as the captain of our salvation. We find a principle in scripture that when God wants to send a message to his people, he will often send an angelic messenger. But when he wants to save his people, our Lord comes and rescues us himself. My friends, what a comfort this should be to our souls today. The Lord Jesus Christ did not keep his people from the furnace, but he came and found them in it. As one commentator said, "He does not always shield us from all distresses and dangers, but it is in the loneliness, the betrayal, and the loss that the fourth man comes and walks with us." Like the all-sufficient shepherd of Psalm 23, he is the one who comes to be with us even along the path where the shadow of death itself weighs down upon us.

Even as we think about our friends Latimer and Ridley, although the Lord did not come to save them from the flames, we can be absolutely confident that he saved them in the midst of them. Why? Because their souls belong to the Savior and yet for Nebuchadnezzar, our text provides us with another example of satire and mockery because as his powerlessness compared to the one true God has now been put on full display, he calls out to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

into the flames, this time identifying them with the most high God, and he commands them to come out of the fire. As they do, the fourth man is no longer physically visible, but the effects of his protection are unmistakable.

You'll notice in verse 27 of our texts that there is once again an intentional mockery of Nebuchadnezzar's grand plan. We see each of those royal officials listed again, but this time their presence is not mentioned as those there to bow down to the image, but instead, they are now listed as witnesses to the all-powerful protection of the one true and living God. Together, the multitude from every nation and every language is able to see firsthand that even the hair on the heads of these men and the clothing that they were wearing was completely protected from the flames. These men do not even smell like fire as if to declare the true God is not a lifeless distant deity. He's the living, merciful, and gracious Emmanuel, God with us. Therefore, instead of allowing Nebuchadnezzar to make a name for himself once again as he always does, God makes his name great among the nations.

That leads us today to the final section of our passage and it's there that I want us to see that ***We will Conquer Babylon through Christ our king. We will Conquer Babylon through Christ our King.*** Look with me at verse 28. Our text concludes by saying, "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,'" and think about this as the juxtaposition from verse 15, "'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."

So as Nebuchadnezzar once again pays at least lip service to the Lord, I want us to notice the three aspects that he observes of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego throughout this ordeal. May these observations be true of us before a watching world as well. First, he points to their trust in the most high God. He recognizes that they trust God above and beyond anything or anyone else. Second, he points to their obedience to God's law, even when it means disobedience to the commands of the king and third, he points to their willingness to die rather than compromise their devotion to God. From that threefold observation, Nebuchadnezzar makes a decree that imposes the death penalty on those who even speak against the one true and living God. Oh, how his tone has changed! Then he promotes these three men in his kingdom.

So friends, what I want us to recognize today is that these three Hebrew men did not compromise on the commands of God, even though it would have been easier in the moment and seemingly more beneficial to do so. Instead, they held firm their God-given convictions, and the Lord blessed their faithfulness. Although the Book of Daniel has all of these amazing, miraculous examples as we have seen and we will see of God protecting and preserving his people, what I also want us to understand is that the purpose of the Book of Daniel is not to bring us to the flawed conclusion that if we are faithful, then we'll be invincible. Like the example of Latimer

and Ridley we began with today, there have been multitudes of believers throughout history who have been martyred in the midst of their faithfulness.

But what God does intend to convey to us through this third chapter of Daniel is that his sovereign lordship in his eternal kingdom supersedes every human power, authority, and kingdom of this world. Therefore, our all-powerful God will not only sustain us and give us the grace we need to be faithful, especially when it's hard. But whether it is in this life or in the life to come, he will ultimately and finally deliver us from the sin and the rebellion that we experience in this life. Babylon can take our home, our job, and our possessions, but it cannot take our faith in Jesus Christ. Who is it that secures and preserves this salvation for us? Who is it that has been entrusted from the Father with the eternal kingdom and with the destiny of God's people? Well, he is that fourth man from the furnace, none other than our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Just as we've seen today, God himself came down to save his people. He entered into his own creation in order to inaugurate the dawning of a new creation and a new kingdom. But then as the king of this new kingdom, he did something that no one would've expected the king to do. He sacrificed his own life for the citizens of his kingdom and by dying and conquering the grave, he brings us victory, taking away even the sting and the stench of death itself. The responsibility he brings to his people is that of repentance and faith. He simply calls us like little children to humble ourselves before him, confess our sins, and to turn from the temporary securities that this world and its nations, its kings, and its political systems claim to offer, and instead to trust in his power and his sovereignty over the nations, to trust in the forgiveness and the grace and the mercy that the King of kings alone is able to offer. Brothers and sisters, this is how we live faithfully in the midst of Babylon. Pray with me.

O Father, we do come to you once more to give you thanks, to offer up our gratitude for who you are. We thank you for the truths about yourself that you have revealed from Daniel chapter 3 and I pray, O God, that these truths will sink deeply into both our minds and our hearts. May we be encouraged, convicted, and challenged by what we've seen from your Word today day. I pray that by the power of your Spirit, you will take this truth and you'll use it to transform our lives for your glory and we pray this in Christ's name, Amen.