

The Fiery Furnace

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[0 : 00] Let us worship God. We shall sing to his praise from Psalm 40.

Psalm 40. And we're going to sing from verse 5 to 9. Psalm 40, verse 5.

O Lord my God, for many are the wonders thou hast done. Thy gracious thoughts to us who art far above all thoughts are gone. In order none can recommend to thee, if them declare and speak of them my word, they more than can be numbered are.

No sacrifice nor offering didst thou at all desire. Mine ears so bored, sin offering thou and burnt didst not require. Then to the Lord these were my words.

I come, behold and see. Within the volume of the book it written is of me. To do thy will I take delight. O thou my God that art.

[1 : 09] Yea, that most holy law of thine I have within my heart. Within the congregation great I righteousness did preach. Lo thou dost know, O Lord, that I refrained not my speech.

So I can sing these verses 5 to 9 of Psalm 40. O Lord my God, for many are the wonders thou hast done. O Lord my God, for many are the wonders thou hast done.

Thy gracious thoughts to us. O Lord my God, for many are the wonders thou hast done.

O Lord my God, for many are the people of eucharist, what many are the stories that are written I who hast done.

If then the peace with And the sick of them Thy holy word Thine kindly number time You sacrifice the offering It's now a joy desire My night's the worst in all Bring the room a corn pit Snodling wine Then to the Lord

[3 : 27] Please dwell in my words I don't keep what I see Within the bottom of the blue It retains us all to me To do thy will Like a city light O thou my God That God Is that most holy Love all I am I have within my heart

Within the congregation grave Thy righteousness retreat No thou just know O Lord But I Refrain Let not I see Let us join together in prayer Let's pray Lord God in heaven Help us to appreciate That we are in close proximity To the God who occupies The throne of the universe You are the God

Who created heaven and earth You are the God Who Has life Within Your very being As we Even acknowledged In the morning service It is in you that we live And move And have our being And that can be a prayer Offered by All who occupy This world Of the present All whoever Took their place Within the scene of time And all whoever will As God You supply us with Whatever it is That we need to To Continue Our existence Here in this world And there are those Who Rightly apply The sciences Even these gifts From on high

That enable them To understand This world To appreciate How it works And to Even investigate The areas Of mystery And arrive at Their own Conclusions But whatever Man believes Concerning Its origin Its Continued Existence And The possibility Otherwise Of its survival This world Is in your hands Much more so Than it is In the hands Of any creature Or anything That the creature Has power over We bless you And thank you And we trust In The God Who is almighty The one Who has no Limit To that Power That is Inexhaustible No matter What drain Is placed Upon The resources That you Possess Be they Material

Or spiritual The very Fact That they Are They have Their origin In the divine Being Means that There is Sufficient To meet To meet All the Demands That are Made Upon it When some Speculate Regarding The sun Whether it Is Destined to Exhaust Its power In the process Of time Or whether The moon And the Sun Will Be dislocated From their Orbits And this World suffers Because of That These are Things that Are in your Hands more Than they are In the hands Of any who Speculate Or survey These things Do not Allow us To forget That To believe Otherwise As we Come to Place Our Cares And concerns Into your Hands Whoever It is That we

[8 : 33] Turn to And we Give thanks For the Many That are Placed at Our disposal That can Be of Assistance To us When When our Needs Are pressing Those who Depend on Nurses And doctors And The various Agencies That ensure That our Continued Existence Is a Pleasurable One Or even A bearable One We give Thanks for All such And we Pray That you Would remind Us even In the Provision Of these Things That we Are indebted To you The God Who is The giver Of every Good and Perfect Gift But more So we Are in Your hands Dependent Upon you For supplying Our needs And we Acknowledge That and Bless you Need for The fact That we Have much To be Thankful For even Within

The sphere Of our Existence That we Have food To satisfy The needs Of our Body That we Have sheltered To ensure That The threats That the Environment Can sometimes Bring Are kept At bay We can See so Many Privileges That we Enjoy And when We compare Ourselves To others We see That They have So little Of these Resources At their Disposal There are Many Who starve There are Many Who Suffer Want And who Are at A death's Door Even because Of lack Of food And sustenance Lack of Shelter Lack of Of the Provisions That we Take for Granted Do not Allow us To think That we

Deserve Anything More than They do We think Of the Places in The world Where these Priorities That That We have So differ From the Priorities That they Have We give Thanks That we Can turn To you The God Of heaven And pray For those In need And pray For places In the World Such as The Ukraine Who are In the Grip of War Other nations Likewise We think Of Pakistan And the Continent There where Floods Have So Brought Devastation And many Have suffered The loss Of life And we See that Whatever Comes in Its wake That there Are many Things that We could And should Be doing With an Eye to

The glory Of the God Who is The giver Of these Things that We enjoy So remember Remember us In mercy Even by Opening the Eyes of Our Understanding And enabling Us to See the Plight of Others Even more Than focus Upon the Needs that We may have Ourselves That in the Light of Of Circumstances Appears So Meaningless In comparison Do not Allow us To think Otherwise We pray That you Would Bless to Us the Provision That you Make for Us Spiritually In the Gospel That we Are allowed To come Together At this Time To worship Openly That we Are allowed To hear A gospel That presents Christ to Us and Reminds us That he Alone is The saviour

Of sinners That we Are not Found in a Place where False gods And false Idols are Held out Meaningless In all Their endeavours To save Souls And as They are Presented As the Saviours Of souls If indeed They believe In the Existence Of a Soul There are So many Vain religions That look At life As something That is Cyclical That is Repetitive They live Their life In this World And they Exhaust The means That they Have Even of Life itself And then They resume That in Some other Guise Or In some Other Body The awful Reality Of being Enslaved To such Teaching And to Such An awful Slavery We cannot

[13 : 38] Comprehend So we pray For these Nations Of the Earth Where the Black Darkness Of ignorance Prevails May the Gospel Of your Grace Make inroads Into these Places May those Who bear Testimony Be preserved From being Harmed As they Live out Christ Like lives In the Sight of Those who Would wonder For themselves What this Christ Can do For them So sanctify The gospel To us To that End So that Those who Hear it And proclaim It Would Water it Purposely So that It Would not Fall As seed To the Ground That Would Perish When it Falls But that It Would Prosper In whatever Way you Have purposed For it And we Pray for Fertile Ground Even In our Own Mids Where the

Seed of The gospel Be it Heard By Young Or Old Be it Heard Through the Preaching Of the Gospel In this Place Or Through Other Medium We pray That you Would Draw us To yourself And that You would Be willing To hear The prayers Of your People As they Anticipate Blessing Blessings Such as Were once The The Noral But As you Withhold Your Blessing We cry Out That you Would Rend us Under the Heavens And come Down And prove To us Now That you Are Indeed God So as We see The cycle Of communion Seasons Resume Once again In our Island In whatever Way God Asked That The gatherings Of your People Would be Blessed The preaching Of the Word The remembrance Of your Name in Christ That it Would Continue To Create Interest

In the One Who is At your Right Hand Watch over Us now And bless Your word To us And cleanse Us from Every sin In Jesus Name Amen We're going To read In the Old Testament Scriptures Reading in The book Of Daniel And we're Going to Read the Third Chapter Daniel Chapter Three Read the Whole Chapter Never had Nessas the King Made an Image of Gold Whose Height was Threescore Cubits And the Breadth Thereof Six Cubits He set It up On the Plain Of Dura In the Province Of Babylon Then Nebuchadnezzar The king Sent to Gather Together The princes The governors And the Captains The judges And the Treasurers The counselors The sheriffs And all the Rulers of The provinces To come to The dedication Of the image

Which Nebuchadnezzar The king Had set Up Then the Princes The governors And the Captains The judges The treasurers The counselors The sheriffs And all the rulers Of the provinces Were gathered Together Under the Dedication Of the image That Nebuchadnezzar The king Had set Up And they Stood Before the image That Nebuchadnezzar Had set Up Then a Herald Cried Aloud To you It is Commanded O people Nations And languages That at What time Ye hear The sound Of the Cornet Flute Harp Sack But Sultry Dulcimer And all Kinds Of music Ye fall Down And worship The golden Image That Nebuchadnezzar The king Hath set Up And whoso Falleth Not down And worship Shall the Same Hour Be cast Into the Midst Of a Burning Fiery Furnace Therefore At that Time When all The people Heard The sound Of the Cornet Flute Harp Sack But Sultry And all The kinds Of music

All the People The nations And the Languages Fell down And worshiped The golden Image That Nebuchadnezzar The king Had set Up Wherefore At that Time Certain Chaldeans Came near And accused The Jews They spake And said To the King Nebuchadnezzar O king Live Forever Thou O king Has made A decree That every Man shall Hear the Sound Of the Cornet Flute Harp Sack But Sultry And Dulcimer And all Kinds Of music Shall fall Down And worship The golden Image And whoso And whoso Falleth Not down And worshipeth That he Should be Cast into The midst Of a Burning Fiery Furnace There are Certain Jews Whom Thou Has Set Over The Affairs Of The Province Of Babylon Shadroth Meshoth And Abednego These Men O king Had Not To Guard The They Serve Not Thy Gods Nor Worship The Golden Image

[18 : 40] Which Thou Has Set Up Then Nebuchad Nesar In His Rage And Fury Commanded To Bring Shadroth Meshoth And Abednego Then They Brought These Men Before The King Nebuchad Nesar Spoke And Said Unto Them Is It True O Shadroth Meshoth And Abednego Do Not Ye Serve My Gods Nor Worship The Golden Image Which I Have Set Up Now If Ye Be Ready That At What Time Ye Hear The Sound Of The Cornet Fluff Par Sarb Saltari And Dulcimer And All Kinds Of Music Ye Fall Down And Worship The Image Which I Have Made Well But If You Worship Not Ye Shall Be Cast The Same Out Into The Midst Of A Burning Fiery Furnace And Who Is That God That Shall Deliver You Out Of My Hands Shadroth Meshoth And Abed Nego Answered And Said To The King O Nebhad Nesar We Are Not Careful

To Answer The In This Machter If It Be So Of God Whom We Said Was Able To Deliver Us From The Burning Fiery Furnace And He Will Deliver Us Out Of Thine Hand O King But If Not Be It Known Unto The O King That We Will Not Say Thy Gods Nor Worshift The Golden Image Which Thou Has Set Up Then Was Nebah Had Mesa Full Of Fury And The Form Of His Visage Was Changed Against Shatter Of Meshach And Abed Niko Therefore He Spake And Commanded That They Should Heat The Furnace One Seven Times More Than It Was Want To Be Heated And He Commanded The Most Mighty Men That Were In His Army To Bind Shatter Meshach And Abed Niko And To Cast Them Into The Burning Fiery Furnace Then These Men Were Bound In Their Coats Their Hosen And Their Heats And Their Other Garments And Were Cast Into The Midst Of The Burning Fiery Furnace Therefore

Because The King's Commandment Was Urgent And The Furnace Exceeding Hot The Flame Of The Fire Slew Those Men That Took Up Shatter Meshach And Abed Niko And These Three Men Shatter Meshach And Abed Niko Fell Down Bound Into The Midst Of The Burning Fiery Furnace Then Nebuchad Nesar The King Was Astoned And Rose Up In Haste And Spake And Said Unto His Counselors Did Not We Cast Three Men Bound Into The Midst Of The Fire They Answered And Said Unto The King True O King He Answered And Said Lo I See Four Men Loose Walking In The Midst Of The Fire And They Have No Hurt And The Form Of The Force Is Like The Son Of God Then Abed Nesar Came Near To The Mouth Of The Burning Fire And Spake And Said Shadrach Meshoch And Abednego Ye Servants Of The Most

High God Come Forth And Come Hither Then Shadrach Meshoch And Abednego Came Forth Off The Midst Of The Fire And The Princes Governors And Captains And The King's Counselors Being Gathered Together Saw These Men Upon Whose Bodies The Fire Had No Power Nor Was A Hair Of Their Heads Singed Neither Were Their Coats Changed Nor The Smell Of Fire Had Passed On Them Then Abed Nesar Spake And Said Blessed Be The God Of Shadrach Meshoch And Abednego Who Hath Sent His Angel And Delivered His Servants That Trusted In Him And Have Changed The King's Word And Yielded Their Worship Any God Except Their Own God Therefore I Make A Decree That Every People Nation And Language Which Speak Anything Amiss Against The God Of Shadrach

Meshoch And Abednego Shall Be Cut In Pieces And Their Houses Shall Be Made A Downhill Because There Is No Other God That Can Deliver After This Thought Then The King Promoted Shadrach Meshoch And Abednego In The Province Of Babylon Amen And May the Lord That His Blessing To His Reading Of His Word And To His Name Be The Praise We're Going To Sing From The Second Psalm Psalm 2 We're Singing From The Beginning To Verse 7 Five Stanzas Psalm 2 From The Beginning Why Rage The Heathen And We In Things Why Do The People Mind Kings Of The Earth Do Set Themselves And Princes Are Combined To Plot Against The Lord And His Anointed Sing Thus Let Us

[23 : 43] Asunder Break Their Bands And Cast Their Cords From Us He That In Heaven Sits Shall Laugh The Lord Shall Scorn Them All Then Shall He Speak To Them She Vex Them Shall Yet Not Withstanding I Have Him To Be My King Appointed And Oversyld My Holy Hill I Have Him King Anointed The Sure Decree I Will Declare The Lord Hath Said To Me Thou Art Mine Only Son This Day I Have Begotten Thee We'll Sing These Versions 1 Through To 7 Of Psalm 2 Why Rage The Heathen And Rain Things Why Do The People Mind Why Reach The Heathen And In Vain Why Do The

People Mind Kings Doom Joy Men Rage Dear Fear The best as an angelic servants And Christ their forms from us He that in heaven exists shall love The Lord shall storm them all

Then shall we speak to them And rot and rage in its redemption Yet not will stand in your garden To be like in your poison And your little Zion on the holy hill I have the King anointed Assured in me I will be glad The Lord shall have said to me

Thou art my only son this day I have begotten thee So we turn to the passage that we read Book of Daniel in the third chapter And we're going to look at this whole chapter this evening It's a familiar story to many I would imagine One of these Bible stories that very many of us Read and heard Heard in the As children Heard often as children And we try to imagine What this was like Particularly the picture I have in mind

Is a picture of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego With this fourth person In the midst of the fiery furnace And of course these pictures are just the work of Other people's imaginations But your own imagination as a child Works over time And you try and imagine what it's like And when you think of a furnace The picture that you have of a furnace The only furnace I knew as a child Was the one that I saw in school So that small furnace Which burnt coal And you try to picture How you could actually see The faces of three or four men In that furnace But then when you see other picture books They have a big pit and so on Anyway many ask the question Why is it in this chapter That we have these three men Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego And there is no mention

[28 : 57] Of Daniel The man whose name Is on this book And where is he Why is he not mentioned Why is he not featuring In this part of the book And I don't have an answer for that I don't think any person Can answer that You might suspect that At the end of chapter 2 You read there how How the three men Were given a particular role To play in Babylon But Daniel we are told Sits at the king's gate So there is a division made Between their particular roles Whatever these roles are Whether that has anything To do with it or not It's not given to us It's not We're not told But I want us just simply

To take three or four Things from this book And the temptation Because it is a narrative Is to spiritualise it As I said before Or to just read through The narrative And take bits and pieces Out of it And it's hard to apply it Meaningfully But it's in the word of God And we're meant to learn From it Whatever it is We are meant to learn That's another matter But there's three or four things That I want to highlight From this chapter It's quite A wordy chapter But It's quite repetitive Many of Many of you Would have noticed that And The repetition I think Is there for a reason And I think it highlights The foolishness Of the king It highlights The How

How How he is to Made to appear Because You'll notice that You know Not only is there A repetition Of the Musical instruments There's also A repetition Of those Officers Of government Present Princes Governors Captains Churches Treasurers Counselors Sheriffs Rulers of the province And That Seems to be Quite a full list And then it's Mentioned again But then You will notice That These words Are repeated The Nebuchadnezzar The king Sent to gather Together These princes And They were Invited to come To the dedication Of the image Which Nebuchadnezzar The king Had set up These words Are repeated Throughout The king Had set up Nebuchadnezzar Had set up

The king Had set up So that Some commentators At least suggest That this is a Grammatical device To draw attention To the Very foolish Nature of what Is actually Being attempted By the king Highlighting That this is His doing He is the one Responsible For building This grotesque Statue That is Drawing attention To himself And the foolishness Of it The futility Of it Is highlighted In that Reputation Well We are Confirmed With I think First of all By that By that Ego That is Behind it The statue Is big And the Ego That is Responsible For it Is Bigger Still I would

Suggest That Anyway Secondly We are Brought Face to Face With a Vindictive Spirit That feeds Into That ego A Vindictive Spirit Which is Responsible For making The king Condemn Shadrach Meshach And Abed Niko And the Two Feed into Each other And the Two Are shown To be What I Think you Would call It That they Are The spirit That is at The heart Of them Is destructive Not just In its Focus But in The way That it Creates In themselves A negative Feeling The third Thing we Have is The Threat That is Made Of the Fiery

[34 : 04] Furnace A trial Of The faith Of These Men They are Told What it Will cost For them To Continue Having Faith in God But That does Not Negate Their faith Doesn't Decrease Their faith If anything It creates A greater Understanding Of what Their faith Is all About And then Finally The way That they Are able To Demonstrate By Their faith To the King The reality Of their God So these Are things You can Discover Just by Reading Through This chapter There's nothing Terribly Complex About it I would Hope But they Are things That should Be highlighted And that Each one Of us Can Reflect Upon

We Mentioned That the King Has a Huge Ego Maybe That's not Your opinion Of what You are Presented With But we Are not Told Why Nebuchadnezzar Desire To do This But we Are told Clearly That he Is responsible For it He Had Made An image Of gold And Some say That it's Gold plate I'm sure Bearing in Mind the Size Of the Image That the Amount of Gold Necessary To create Such a Monstrosity Would be Quite Quite A Precious Amount A very Great amount Of gold Would be Required When we Read Most of Our Bibles Most of Them Stick to The

Measurements That we Have Here A Height Of Three Score Cubits And The Breadth Of Six Cubits And Interpreters Tell us That It was A height Of About Sixty Feet Or maybe No Ninety Feet Ninety Feet And six Foot Six Foot Wide Ninety Feet Tall Ninety Feet Tall And Nine Feet Wide And The Measurements Are I don't Suppose Mean Anything To us We Can't Really Visualize What It's Like But What Came To Mind Was If You Think About The Angel Of The North Some Of You Will Have Heard About The Angel Of The North It's A Sculpture That

Was Created By A Man Called Gorman And Anthony Gormley And He Lived In Gateshead And He Created This Statue Sculpture Which Is So Tall And The Wingspan I'm Not Sure How It Compares To The Height Of It But The Height Of It Is 65 Feet So Just Bear That In Mind Think Of The Angel Of The North Which Takes Up The Whole Of The Horizon Where It Stands And Most People From A Distance Can See It This Figure Was Erected By The King Of A Statue Of Gold And There's No Explanation Given To To Us As To Why He Would Want To Do Such A Thing Perhaps He Was Stimulated By

What God Told Him That Sounds Strange Why Would Somebody Create Something So Clearly Self Serving At The Word Of God And If You Remind Yourself Of What The Lord Said To Nebuchad Nesar Prior To This In The Second Chapter If You Remember The Dream Of The King He Saw In His Dream An Image And The Image Of The Head Was A Fine Gold To Spread Breast And Arms Of Silver His Belly And Thighs Of Glass His Legs Of Iron His Feet Part Iron Part Play And He Was Told That Thou O King Art A King Of Kings For The God Of Heaven Hath Given The A

[39 : 05] Kingdom Power And Strength And Glory And So On And It May Well Be That You Know Allowing His Mind To Think Upon This That The Servant Of God Had Told Them That He Was His Head Of Gold So Maybe It Fed Upon That But Whatever It Is That Stimulated His Desire For Greatness To Be Seen In This Image That He Created It Was Clearly Selfish And Rather Than Making Him Acknowledge God Who Gave Him That Information It Focused Entirely On Himself And I Think There Is At The Heart Of This This

Account That We Have You Read Carefully Through It Through The Reputation Through The Emphasis That There Is Upon The Passion Of Nebuchad Nesar Particularly His Own Emphasis His Self Interest And His Self Elevation That It Gives You An Insight Into The Nature Of Pride And The Nature Of The Human Ego Where A Person Can Quite Easily Be So Taken Up With Self And Self Importance And Putting Himself At The Forefront Of His Own Thinking And Where Power Is Married To It At The Forefront Of Other People's Thinking You Can See That At The Heart Of What Is Said There

Is Something That That Is So Rotten To The Core That We Would Always Be Wise To Guard Against It One Of The Commentators Says This The King Is Setting Up Something Meant To Impress Others And Celebrate Himself And Anybody Who Is Intent On Self Elevation Out Of A Sense Of Self Import Is Somebody Who Is Heading For A Fall Which In Many Respects Negates The Confession That He Makes If You Remember At The End Of Chapter Two He Spoke Of God Who Had Explained His Dream To Him Through Daniel And He Said Of That God That He Was A God Who Like No Other Do Remember He

He Exalted God Your God Is A God Of Gods And A Lord Of Kings A Revealer Of Secrets Seeing You Could Reveal This Secret And Talk Is Cheap In Many Ways One To a vain pride. If you read Pilgrim's Progress, you'll find that one of the sins that features there that is warned against. Many of the Puritan preachers spoke about the sin of pride.

Very often they were of the same opinion, especially they saw it not just as a sin that is prevalent within general society, but that the Christian can suffer from. And they very often had a similar idea, several well-known preachers of that vintage. And they had the same idea of how pride was at the heart of every person, not just people who had no vestige of pride visible. Thomas Hooke, for example, he says, Pride is a vice which cleaves so fast to the heart of man, that if we were to strip ourselves of all hearts one by one, we should undoubtedly find it the very last and hardest to put off. You can see the description that is made here. Pride being something that is, that every one of us can suffer from to a degree.

[44 : 31] And it's so deeply seated that even when we tackle many more obvious sins, this one is most difficult to remove. Well, you could argue that Nebuchadnezzar was full of it. That he was somebody who was in the grip of a egotistical, proud mindset that wanted himself to be the focus of people's attention.

And it didn't matter who it was that would suffer because of it. And remember, this is done against the background of an exposure to God and the wisdom of God and the power of God. He puts his own idea of what he is able to do against what God in reality alone is able to do.

Now, put alongside that the next part of it, where we find the king having lifted up this monstrosity and called the nations to come to worship. And it's not just the dignitaries of Babylon alone, because there's a mixture of peoples that are summoned to take part in this act of worship, which is what it is.

They are called to pay homage to this statue of the king. And every one of them, without exception, is called to do that. And just to show how little, this thought about the God of Daniel and those who follow him, it is pointed out very quickly to him by the Chaldeans, that these three men do not pay homage to the gods of Babylon. And they have no intention of paying homage to this statue that is lifted up by Nebuchadnezzar. And they speak out against them and draw attention of the king to what is true of them.

And if you think about these called the Chaldeans, you would have thought they would have bitten their lip or bitten their tongue and said nothing. Why? Because they owe their very existence to the fact that Daniel interpreted the king to the king.

[47 : 32] They were one of the groups that were under the sentence of death. If they had been left and Daniel had remained silent, then they would have died, because the king had pronounced death as a sentence upon their head. And yet, through jealousy and envy, they draw attention to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. And where such vices reside, mercy is one of the graces that suffers. It's a very, very powerful emotion where a person gives place to jealousy, jealousy. Where jealousy is allowed to master that person's thinking. It is a very destructive force. Just think of our politicians. And when you see the enmity that is in their heart against their fellow politicians, even within the same party, when things go against them. There is an unbridled outpouring of venom. It can only be described as venom coming from their heart. And what stimulus is there for it?

If not, if not petty jealousy that one person is getting applauded or the place that they themselves feel that belongs to them.

And that's what is at the heart of it. These Chaldeans think that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had been elevated to a position that was rightfully theirs.

And they despised them for it. And they despised them for it. And at the first opportunity, they got the knives out. And they did so with great gusto.

Now, can you think of anybody that has ever submitted or yielded to that spirit at any time?

[49 : 59] Have you ever encountered anybody who, because of jealousy, turned on you perhaps, or on somebody else, or perhaps yourself?

Have you found this spirit rising up in you that becomes uncontrollable if it is not understood for what it is?

Well, believe you me, it's not something that is alien to the Christian. It's not something that is outlawed from our lives instantly when we embrace faith.

Well, that it should be and could be and with God's help it can be. But it doesn't mean that it is. It doesn't mean that it is when we see somebody get something or get on in a way that we think, well, we should be the ones or whatever.

But that is what is at the heart of what we hear. At least we see the opportunity arise.

[51 : 12] And these passions, rather than stay quiet and do what any self-respecting person who understands the privilege that they have of even experiencing survival by reason of their good gifts or whatever, instead they go ahead and do this very thing.

And when that is brought together with the spirit that is so prevalent in the king's breast, where he believes himself to be the one at the center of the universe, or should be.

And he is encouraged. You know, if the divines, if theologians are right and they see in the language of this passage which is a deliberate use of language that shows how utterly ridiculous Nippah Naser is in creating such an image, that everybody there knows how ridiculous it is.

Everybody there knows how foolish it is. Everybody there knows that what they are asked to do is meaningless. And yet they go ahead with it.

They play along. But they know it means nothing. And even when they know it means nothing, they are still willing to allow others to be persecuted when they don't play along.

[52 : 50] Such is the vindictive spirit that has taken possession of them. But Daniel's friends will not compromise. They will not yield to the pressure that is brought to bear on them.

Even by the king. And you could argue that the king is showing them some favor by making the opportunity available to them to do this.

This is all you have to do. When you hear the music, bow down. Pay homage. Do the rest. Do what the rest are doing. And everything will be alright. There will be no furnace for you.

But they are not willing to compromise. They are not willing to give up what they believe just for the sake of it. And that is what puts the cat among the pigeons, as it were, as far as Nippah Nesar is concerned.

He is furious because they dare to resist what he requests there. Now do you think they were sensible?

[53 : 58] Now do you think they were sensible? After all, if the suggestion is that the whole of society knew that what the king was doing was stupid.

That it meant nothing. That it meant nothing. That the statue was just a statue. And that the music was just music. And to bow down to that statue meant nothing.

Then it would be easy enough for them to say, we'll do it. We'll do it anyway. It means nothing. They're doing it.

We'll do it. It means nothing. But that's not what they did. And sometimes we see ourselves in our own lives.

There are certain things and we say, well, it doesn't matter. It would be easier just to go with the flow. Do whatever everybody else is doing. What does it matter?

[54 : 57] Who cares? And they could have argued like that. They could have thought like that. I mean, there were only three. And what they were doing? They knew it wasn't worship.

It wasn't. They weren't committing to serving the king as their idol. But that is how compromise comes into our experience.

We can argue ourselves into all kinds of situations where we say, well, it's just a little bit. Just a little thing.

Stuart Briscoe, or Stuart Oliott rather, speaks about the way the Christian believers of the 20th century have found themselves persecuted in different parts of the world because of their faith.

And they are required in certain parts of the world to confess other gods and forsake the God who is their God, the God of the scripture.

[56 : 11] And if they don't do what they are told, they are persecuted. They are imprisoned. Some are put to death. And some societies, to be a Christian, and many of you will know this, there are some societies, and to be a Christian, the only job that you'll ever get is to be the lowest of the low.

You'll be taking out of the refuse, or you'll be clearing the drains or something. Even if you've got the skills to be a doctor because of your admission to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as a saviour of sinners, you will be despised and made to have no respect within that society.

Whatever menial task is possible will be there because of their love for the Lord Jesus. Now it would be easy for them to say, well, I have skills.

I have education. Surely it would be better for me to pretend I'm not a believer and I can use my skills to be a doctor or to be a nurse or to be something else.

And it will be easier for me. But it will be better for people. And God will be praised and glorified by my doing that.

[57 : 44] You see how it works? You can make an argument that would justify you actually not confessing the name of your God.

Because you're seeing something else as being of more value. But that's not the way Shadrach, Meshach and Habib Nilo thought.

They were convinced that they had to own their God as their God. And if he chose to allow them to avoid the furnace, then so be it.

But if he chose to let them perish, so be it. The glory was going to be his either way. And that is really the way it is for them.

They see that there is only one option for them. Because while they may avoid the furnace by denying God, they will have the furnace of adversity or the furnace of affliction in their own conscience from that point on.

[59 : 03] It's not something that's easy to live with. Someone quotes Samuel Rutherford and he says, You will not get leave to steal quietly to heaven in Christ's company without conflict and a cross.

You may want it. You may prefer it. But it is not the way that God purposes for his people. And it's the choice not simple.

Just conform and be liberated. But they have clearly their own mind. O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.

If it 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 unto thee, O King, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up.

That was their position and they went to back down. And that's what it boils down to. Their refusal ensures that the furnace, even harder than before, is preferable to denying God.

[60 : 20] And you know the remarkable story of what can only be a miracle. They're thrown into the furnace and when they look into the furnace they see not three but four men.

And many people speculate at who the fourth person is. Some say this is a theophany. This is a Christophany. This is none other than the person of God.

Because then B'Hannaser says what he sees is the son of God. Now how could he know? Has he ever seen him? Who has seen him? But he names him like that.

Some people find that as an anachronism. Something that appears on the pages of scripture that is not really meant to be there.

Historically they don't belong there. But he knows that there is something supernatural happening. He knows that there is someone with him in the fire.

[61 : 25] He knows because they are not burning. Their clothes are not burning. Their beards are not burning. Their hair is not burning. They're as pristine as they went in to the furnace.

As they are stood in the midst of it. And he calls them out of there. And he makes this confession concerning who they are to them.

Whatever it was that that confession means. As we said. It's easy for him to make such an acknowledgement.

He bears testimony. However meaningful that testimony is. But the fact of the matter is. And this is what we all need to remind ourselves.

God's promises to his people. God's promise to his people. Is never a way out. But a way through. In his company. And it's good always to bear that in mind.

[62 : 27] There may be many times when God's people will be required to. To endure persecution. Endure sufferings of whatever description.

And it's not to tell you. You don't have to go through these things. But to have God with you. And that's important.

Paul's epistle to the Romans reminds us. Of that fact. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died.

Rather that is risen again. Who is even at the right hand of God. Who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ.

Shall tribulation. Or distress. Or persecution. Or famine. Or nakedness. Or peril. Or sword. As it is written for thy sake. We are killed all day long. We are accounted.

[63 : 26] As sheep for the slaughter. No. In all these things. We are more than conquerors. Through him that loved us. For I am persuaded. That neither death.

Nor life. Nor angels. Nor principalities. Nor powers. Nor things present. Nor things to come. Nor height. Nor depth. Nor any other creature. Shall be able to separate us.

From the love of God. Which is in Christ Jesus. The Lord. What is Paul saying? Well he is saying that. Whatever it is that you are in.

As long as you understand that Christ is in it with you. That is what makes the difference. The furnace was heated up seven times.

But that didn't matter. For them what mattered was that God was with them. In their trial. And it can be as simple as that.

[64 : 27] There is nothing mysterious about it. Yes it is a miracle. But there is no mystery in the promise that it holds out to God's people. Of every generation.

That their belief. Their faith. Their trust. In what God is promising. In his word. As long as it is adhered to.

Then his promise will not fail them. God bless to us these few thoughts. Let's pray. Ever blessed God.

We have many shortcomings. We have many failings. We have many temptations. To encounter in this world. Even to be like the world. So that we cannot be separated from the world.

But you tell us to look to the Lord. To enable us to live in the world. And not be of the world. And to look to the promises.

[65 : 25] That are yea and amen in Christ Jesus. Help us so to do. Help us to be steadfast. In our commitment to Christ. As we live out life here.

In this world. Pardon sin in him. Amen. We are going to finish our service. Singing this last part of Psalm 2.

The last four verses of Psalm 2. Ask of me and for heritage. The heathen I make thine. And for possession I to thee will give earth that must lie.

Though shalt as with them wicthy rod of iron break them all. As a port of share. Though shalt them dash in pieces small. Know therefore kings. Be wise. Be taught.

Ye judges of the earth. Save God in fear. And see that ye join trembling with your mercy. Is he the sun resting as high. Or ye perish from the way.

[66 : 23] If once his wrath begin to burn. Blessed all that on him stay. Ye's precious. Ask of me. And for heritage. The heathen I make thine.

Ask of me and for heritage.

The heathen I make thine. And for possession I to thee.

Will give earth that must lie. Though shalt as with the winty rod.

Our blind will fix them all. And as a port of share.

[67 : 30] And as a port of share. Than the gush of his pieces small. Know therefore kings.

Be wise. Be taught. Be judges of the earth.

shall follow Goldberg. Say God in fear. William Phennel. Let us hear the key, join
trembling with the earth.

To see the sun as in his eye, he perish from the way.

It once is dry, begins to burn, let us know the joy of his day.