

Lesson 4 Daniel 3

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 21 September 2023

Preacher: Brady Owens

[0 : 00] We're going to be in Daniel chapter 3 today, and just to remind you, the ones that we've done already, I have put on our sermon audio site.

So you just go to fbcmedina.org, and then you find sermon audio. Click on that, and then you'll come to a page that you can filter out between Sunday morning sermons and daytime studies, and you can look for Daniel and you can find all of them.

I've included with that audio the PowerPoint that I do as well as the little handout. And so if you have trouble finding that, I also have been trying to email the link.

Come on in. I've also been trying to email the link out so that you can just get directly right to it if you need to. Anyway, so we're in Daniel chapter 3, and I need to give...

Why don't we just take a read through Daniel chapter 3. It's a story that everybody is familiar with.

[1 : 12] You could probably tell me the story just as well as us read it, but I think it's good to read it. And so do I have somebody willing to read maybe the first half of the story, Daniel chapter 3?

Say about 1 through about, I don't know, 13 or something like that. Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold whose height was 60 cubits and its width 6 cubits.

He set it up in the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word together together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar 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 peoples, nations and languages, that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up.

[2 : 48] And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. So at that time when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp and lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations and languages fell down and worshiped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews. They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, O King, live forever. You, O King, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the gold image.

And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. There are certain Jews whom you have set up for the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

These men, O King, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods of worship or worship the gold image which you have set up. Okay, why don't we pick up with somebody else there.

Somebody start in verse 13. Then in a furious rage, Nebuchadnezzar gave orders to bring in Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

[4 : 11] So these men were brought before the king. Nebuchadnezzar asked them, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, is it true that you don't serve my gods or worship the gold statue I've set up? Now if you're ready, when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, drum and every kind of music, fall down and worship the statue I made.

But if you don't worship it, you will immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire. And who is the god who can rescue you from my power? Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, Nebuchadnezzar, we don't need to give you an answer to this question.

If the god we serve exists, then he can rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire, and he can rescue us from the power of you, the king. But even if he does not rescue us, we want you as king to know that we will not serve your gods or worship the gold statue you set up.

Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with rage, and the expression on his face changed towards Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. He gave orders to heat the furnace seven times more than was customary, and he commanded some of the best soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the furnace of blazing fire.

So these men, in their trousers, robes, head coverings and other clothes, were tied up and thrown into the furnace of blazing fire. Since the king's command was so urgent and the furnace extremely hot, the raging flames killed the men who carried Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego up.

[5 : 36] And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, fell bound into the furnace of blazing fire. Then King Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in alarm. He said to his advisors, Didn't we throw three men bound into the fire?

Yes, of course, your majesty, they replied to the king. He exclaimed, Look, I see four men, not tied, walking around in the fire unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.

Can you, you can, okay, go ahead. Nebuchadnezzar then approached the door of the furnace of blazing fire and called, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, you servants of the Most High God, come out.

So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire. When the satraps, prefects, governors and the king's advisors gathered around, they saw that the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men.

Not a hair of their heads was singed, their robes were unaffected and there was no smell of fire on them. Nebuchadnezzar exclaimed, Praise to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. He sent his angel and rescued his servants who trusted in him.

[6 : 42] They violated the king's command and risked their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own god. Therefore, I issue a decree that anyone of any people, nation or language who says anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego will be torn limb from limb and his house made of garbage dump.

For there is no other god who is able to deliver like this. Then the king rewarded Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon. Okay. Okay. What I want to do is just sort of walk back through that story and give you kind of an outline of how you might kind of think about breaking down chapter 3 and putting in its parts.

And along the way, just kind of give a few comments. Then after we do that, there's three kind of big points or lessons that we can kind of draw from this story that I want to go over.

So the first part you would say is verse 1 through verse 7 and I would call that this is Nebuchadnezzar rebels against God.

Nebuchadnezzar rebels against God. The reason that I'm saying that is because this story follows the story before it and what you had in the story before is that though Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom was great and golden, it was limited and temporary.

[8 : 04] And so what you have is you have Nebuchadnezzar basically trying to say, no, no, I'm all the kingdoms. He's making a statue of gold trying to say that he is the king of kings and that he's not going to be brought to an end.

It's similar to a quote by Friedrich Nietzsche, if you know who Friedrich Nietzsche is. He's famous for saying this. He says, There cannot be a God because if there were one, I could not believe that I was not him.

That's a very tall order. And that is the heart of the king here. His heart is that he's the one to be worshipped.

His word is law. And so he can't stand the idea that he's not God. He's not in charge of these things. And what he's done by gathering all of these people together is, so it talks about it's in the plane of Dura, right?

And it says the word Dura. That word Dura can mean a couple of things, but it's kind of the idea of some other structure that's already built. It could be like a platform, a raised platform. It could be a wall, a tower.

[9 : 20] And there's a lot of split opinion about this, but you kind of get the idea that this is something that becomes very centrally located, and you almost get this sort of hell back to the Tower of Babel at which the nations are divided by language.

It's like Nebuchadnezzar's trying to bring them all back together. He's trying to accomplish something that so many people in our day and age would love to see, a one-world government with a one-world religion with everybody all unified, and yet they're unified around him.

And that's his goal, and that's his point. One of the things about the way that this is written, if you notice the repetition of the assembly of people, satraps, prefects, governors, counselors, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all rulers of the provinces, that's supposed to be read in that sort of satraps, prefects, governors, counselors, treasurers, judges, magistrates, blah, with a lyre, the harp, the tambourine, the this, the this, with a this, with a this.

And that repetition is a mockery of the worship of the pagans because their worship is very mechanistic. Right? There's no heart. You could say, as Nebuchadnezzar draws all these people together, he wants people who have their lips towards him, but he doesn't care about their heart. Right? And so, what you're thinking and feeling internally is not as important as the external action that you take. This also is the marks.

[11 : 02] You can kind of see the marks of a totalitarian state. The totalitarian state usually has three things. One, it has a symbol of unity. And in this story, that's his image.

Second, there's always a gesture of allegiance. And in this case, it's the vowing to the image. And then there's usually an atmosphere of betrayal so that as people are constantly looking for others who are not complying, so they can point them out so that they can stay hidden.

And so, that's sort of the things you kind of pick up as you read through that. The next part is verses 8 through 13. And this is where Nebuchadnezzar rages at these teens because Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are probably still in their teens, albeit they might be late teens.

The people who accuse these three boys use the very words of the king and say, These men whom you've put in charge.

So they're really trying to stick it to Nebuchadnezzar and they're trying to get under his skin with this. So he's accusing them, or they're being accused of not worshipping and not doing what the king wants.

[12 : 15] And he's not getting what he wants. He wants worship from everyone. And there's some. And I think it's fascinating. You know, the question is always asked, Where's Daniel? And it's like, well, Daniel is probably not there because if Daniel were there, we would hear the story of him not bowing as well.

And it's very possible that he's not there because this is in this plane of Dura type thing. So that's verses 8 through 13. Verses 14 through 18, Nebuchadnezzar experiences rejection.

He's rejected. You kind of get the feel in verses 14 through 15 that the king is seeking to control his anger as he starts to give these men a second chance, right?

And that's kind of an interesting thing. I think the reason he's giving them a second chance is because he is trying to save face. I did put these men in charge. And maybe they just don't understand how important this is.

So let's give them one more chance. He's going to give them this loyalty test and then says this audacious thing, What God is there who can deliver you from my hands?

[13 : 23] And he gives them the warning, Listen, we're going to throw you into the fiery furnace if you do not bow. But their response is interesting. Their response, they say there in verse, what is it, 16, 15?

You know, they're saying, We do not need to give you an answer. Their minds are already made up before they come to this point. They've made up their mind a long time ago.

Being Jews, they are serving the one true God. And if they did this, okay, just for instance, let's just say they bowed to the image. That is the very thing that they're in exile for.

Not being loyal to God, but worshipping other gods. And they say, God is able to deliver us. Now, some translations will say the idea, you know, if God exists, it's not that they doubt God's existence, but they're just trying to lay it out.

They're just trying to lay it out. Hey, our God, He's God of all gods, and He's there, and since He's there, He can do what He wants to. And they're just sort of laying out His sovereignty is what they're doing. He is able to deliver us, and they say, from the furnace and your hand.

[14:36] So they kind of make a little dig at Nebuchadnezzar. But then, this is the statement that's so astounding. If He does not, if He does not deliver us, we still are not going to serve you.

What? What an astounding statement. They don't need any kind of safety net to just go out there. You know what I'm saying? Like, so often, I think we might have the mindset that says, well, you know, I would do this for the Lord that would put me in danger if I knew He was going to protect me. You know, and they don't know that God's going to deliver them. And they just jump out there, and they do it anyway. Well, then, the fourth section is verses 19 through 23, and this is where Nebuchadnezzar changes his image.

He changes his image. This is what I find so fascinating. Verse 19 says that his facial expression was altered, and the word expression is the exact same Aramaic word as statue.

[15:44] So through that, this whole chapter so far, worship the statue, worship the statue, and then he alters his own statue. And so it's all about him.

It's all about his, you know, his person that all this is coming to. And it alters because he's angry. And he's so angry that he wants the furnace lit up.

Like, it talks about seven times. That just means as hot as we can possibly get it. That's how hot he wants it. He wants the boys bound, and since they will not fall down to worship him, they will fall down in the furnace.

It's the same Aramaic words. So fall down in worship, or fall down in the furnace. Those are your choices there. They, they, and so they, they go into the furnace.

All right? So then, the last part is that Nebuchadnezzar, verses 24 through 30, recognizes the divine presence. It's interesting that the way the story is written is that you don't know that the boys are being delivered until you get to that point that they're delivered.

[16:58] Like, that, that's hidden from the reader, the first read through, right? You just don't know what's going to happen, and it's the king who tells us what's happening. There's a kind of a suspense that's built into the story, if you will, right?

They're just sort of waiting for us to see this, and it's the king who gets to see the fourth man walking around in the furnace, and he says he's like one of the sons of the gods. Now, we could talk, you know, a little bit about this and say, well, you know, who is this?

And I think we're on pretty good grounds to say that this is a pre-incarnate appearance of the Son of God. And normally, what you call that is you call that a theophany.

A theophany. When you have the second person of the Trinity, the Son of God, making an appearance in the Old Testament before his incarnation, it's called a theophany.

And it does happen throughout the Old Testament. I think that the one walking in the garden is the Son of God. I think the one who meets Joshua as the commander of the army of the Lord is the Son of God.

[18:06] And I think the one here also is the theophany of the Son of God. It just makes so much sense. You know, now, if you say to yourself, well, I'm not sure that that's correct, I'm not going to argue with you because I don't think that's a big major point.

I think the big major point is that God is with them. By His grace, He's with them and He's delivering them from this fiery furnace.

The king is impressed with the miraculous because that's the way a lot of pagans are. Pagans are impressed with the miraculous.

And they want more miracles in order to keep proving it to themselves. And it's just not, it's not necessary because the Holy Spirit lives in us and helps us to know the truth.

So the king is now going to give a new law. Now you can't speak against the Jews' God. You can't speak against the Hebrew God. And so, the end of the story is that he promotes Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

[19:12] So now you've got to think all these other prefects, all these other judges, all these people who are jealous, want to see maybe Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego get, you know, out of the way so they can be bumped up.

Not only has their plan failed, but now they can't use their God against them at least right now they can't figure out how to do it because they can't speak against that God.

That's when you, that's why when you get to chapter 6 with Daniel and they're going like, we can't do anything against him unless we do something in relationship to his God. and then they're able to sort of trick things out.

So that's just sort of the flow of the story, some of the details there to kind of think about. Before we get into the lessons of this, do you have any questions or thoughts about just the story itself and the flow of things?

One thing that struck me when I was going over this before is the statue itself, 60 cubits high, 60 cubits wide.

[20 : 21] That's a 10 to 1 ratio. How unstable that would be. Mm-hmm. Yeah. You kind of wonder, you know, why in the world did you do that?

Because it's magnificent. Yeah. Everybody can see it. It's 90 feet tall, 9 feet wide. Get attention. Right? Yeah, I mean, that's so, that's like, what are you, that's like a telephone pole.

What are you doing? Not exactly a telephone pole. Anybody else? Anything else? Just the flow of the story, any of the details of the story? It's amazing that because he, Nebuchadnezzar made it, made the fire so hot, the men that bound them and threw them in the fire were, were consumed. Yeah. Immediately. Yeah. Yeah. That's funny. Well, there is a, there is a, so, you know, when you say something's a comedy, it's not always ha-ha, but I do think that's a bit I think this is written like a little bit of a mockery, comedy type, type thing.

To just show the, the emptiness of pagan religion. And so, yeah. Well, not that it mattered to the king. He got what he wanted. That's right.

[21 : 37] That's right. Well, so let's talk about, yeah. It's funny though that he just, he uses the moment Nebuchadnezzar does to make it all work for him.

Oh, yeah. You know, he turned it all out. But you know, that was kind of a big concession to admit, hey, the fire didn't even burn these guys up. Oh, sure. There must be some power in this. I better move on to that somewhere.

You know, He's a user, man. He is. He's really good at it. He is. And I think that you can see that, like in our culture in a couple of ways, the same kind of thing. One is, anytime that someone is preaching, teaching, or whatever, and they offer Jesus to lost people so that lost people can get something that they already wanted.

So, and then that's all. That's all that you do with the gospel, if you will, in that. Okay, so I've heard people say, well, you know, if you want to be a better husband, you just need to become a Christian.

And it's like, well, I mean, yeah, Jesus does help you with that, but that's not, like, the reason you become a Christian is because you're going to be suffering under the wrath of God. Like, there's that whole sin part that gets left out so often.

[22 : 46] But I think another way that that happens, and I don't know if it's as big now as it was back when I was a kid, but so much talk and focus on angels, right?

And stories about things that angels have done. And I think there are things that are true, but then angels, like, the amount of attention that our culture gave to angels at that time period would not have been something that any of those angels would have been pleased with because they want all the attention to go to the Lord.

And so, yeah, I just think that he's an opportunistic person who will take advantage of anything for himself. And we're going to see that when we get to the next chapter because his arrogance gets to the height and to the limit.

And so, God will finally deal with him. Okay. Well then, let's talk about a couple lessons. The first lesson from the furnace is this. That God is able to deliver his people from the furnace of exile. God is able to deliver his people from the furnace of exile. Now, this is going to take a little bit to kind of walk through this and I hope that you can follow my reasoning here.

[24 : 00] This exile or this affliction that these Hebrew children are going through, we need to kind of understand the basics of what this type of exile affliction type of thing is.

It's an affliction brought about by remaining steadfast to God in the face of certain persecution, oppression, and trouble.

Let me say that again. It's an affliction brought about by remaining steadfast to God in the face of certain or sure persecution, oppression, and trouble.

This is not just any ordinary suffering and trouble. This is the kind of trouble in which their steadfast faithfulness to God has gotten them into trouble.

Okay? And I do believe that that is the specific application of this passage is that as we try to remain faithful and yet suffer for that faithfulness.

[25 : 07] That's where this story kind of comes into play. Now, why do I say that? Well, let me ask you a question and then let me show you something. What do you think are the most important verses in this chapter?

As you look at it, what are the most important verses in chapter 3? I think Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's response that regardless, even if he doesn't deliver us, we're still not going to worship you.

How many of you would agree with that? Yeah? Yeah, I totally agree with that and I feel like you probably picked that up very naturally, right? I don't know if you remember me telling you about the chiasmic structures, right?

The parallel structures that will happen in a passage where a middle part will kind of pop out. Well, watch this. verses 1-7, the king decrees to worship the statue, but at the very end of the thing, he decrees to worship or to honor the Lord, the Jews God.

Well, the next thing that happens is that the Jews are accused of not worshipping, but the parallel is they become vindicated as well, right? Well, the Jews that are threatened, like he tells them, okay, this is your chance, this is your last chance to do this, but once they don't, they are punished, and what's right in the middle?

[26 : 34] Their confession of faith, verse 16, 17, and 18. And so, these young men are facing a problem, and that problem is how their faithfulness is being worked against them, and used against them in their life.

It's very similar to what you see happening to Peter and John, as they go to the temple and they preach, Acts chapter 4, chapter 5, is the Sanhedrin telling them stop preaching in the name of Jesus.

Their faithfulness to God gets them in trouble, and they eventually have to look at the Sanhedrin and say, it's better for us to obey God than man. Right? So their faithfulness in that.

It's very similar to what happened to the Christians in the early part of the church, in the last part of the Roman Empire, where they had to show up at a temple where Caesar's image was and they had to say, Kaiser Curios, and offer a pinch of incense on the altar.

They were told, you don't have to mean it, your heart doesn't have to be in it, but if you're going to be a part of the Roman Empire and not put into prison, then you have to offer this incense.

[27 : 50] But when Christians wouldn't do that, when they wouldn't offer it to the Caesar or to the other gods of the Romans, the Christians were actually called atheists because they only believed in one true God.

It's a really strange kind of thing, but that's the truth of it. And the point is that the faithfulness and the steadfastness in the walk with the Lord puts us sometimes counter to the world.

Now the question is, do we experience this same kind of a thing? Does our steadfastness in trying to do that which is right put us in the crosshairs? And I think that if you look at it and you think about it in kind of an external sort of way, first, kind of outside of me, there is the possibility, I'll give you a couple examples, if a president or a governor or a mayor says that we must disobey God for something, then our staying steadfast to obey God would then be putting us in that position, right? And so, let me just give you one example, and I know that people can have lots of opinions, and I'm not getting into the science of the pandemic, but I am going to get into this, and that is there are many officials throughout some of our states, Canada, that made laws that said that Christians could not meet on Sunday and gather for worship.

Some places it was said to be non-essential, some places it was just said to be a super spreader, and there's three specific gentlemen that I have in mind, they're all from Canada, and James Coates, Artur Palowski, and Tim Stevens were all arrested on a Sunday morning at their church because they opened their church for people to come worship when the law was only 15 people can be there at a time.

[29 : 45] And so you had the government saying you cannot meet, but what does scripture say? Now I'm not going to argue this today, but I'm firmly convinced that the fourth commandment to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy is a binding law upon Christians.

It's changed from Saturday Sabbath to the Lord's Day Sunday, but I believe that is a binding thing on all Christians. And so for the government to come in and say you can't meet, but yet us remaining steadfast.

Now you don't have to go up against the government and be flaunting it, but you're just being steadfast. And if that puts you in the crosshairs, then that's an example of this kind of a thing. Somebody might say to me, what if we couldn't meet? Because we came from the coast and if a hurricane is coming in and we knew it was going to land this week, we wouldn't have services on Sunday.

Why is that? Because in the providence of God, he's making it so we couldn't. If we were to wake up Saturday Sunday to a 78 flood around here, I wouldn't expect to see you on Sunday.

[30 : 51] But that's because in the providence of God, he's keeping us from it. But it's different when a governing official says, no, you can't do that. It's like Daniel, just continue to pray three times every day.

That's right. What you've always done. So, yes? On a more smaller level, I see where people that are trying to increase fellowship and bring people to God and stuff, and they invite people to church. Now, I knew this when I was growing up. I don't know how prevalent it is today. They would invite people to church so they're the leaders, they're the lawmakers, and they want to give this gift to you or open your eyes to it.

And then the person shows up and they're not wearing appropriate clothing. So they're shunned. I mean, that's just a small thing, but it's like here, we want you to have this, but you can't dress like that.

Yeah. You can't come into this. And, I mean, they would be clean and stuff, but their clothes didn't match up. Back in the days, if you didn't wear a hose and heels and a dress and have nice jewelry on and stuff, you were frowned upon.

[32 : 01] And those people always sat in the back. I mean, as a little kid, I knew that. And that those people, you know, kind of beware of them. This is a church. Yeah. This is, everybody is here to get fixed or something.

This is a hospital. And you're making a rule, but then you're saying, oh, you don't match up. Yeah. You don't. And you have just as big a heart for God as anybody else. Sure.

Sure. You know, we definitely can turn anything into a weapon or, you know, misconstrue something. and it goes back to the heart of things.

And that's where I wanted to take this next is to think about the heart for just a second. Think about what's going on internally. I've made the contention before, and I'll make it again, that even though we're Christians, we still struggle with idolatry.

Okay? Now, most of the time when we think of idolatry, what we're thinking about is we're thinking about some little wooden statue, golden statue that people bowed before. But even the people in the Old Testament who had a statue thought that that statue represented a spiritual reality.

[33 : 08] Okay? And so, when I say that we have idols, what I'm talking about is that we have desires in our hearts that rise so high that those desires control our behavior.

And anything that controls our behavior is an idol or a god to us. Okay? It could be the cell phone. Right. It could be the cell phone. It could be anything.

It could be a lot of things that are even not very tangible. It could be comfort. It could be peace. It could be love. It could be acceptance. It could be all kinds of things.

I'll give you an example, and we can see this pretty well in like a toddler. Right? A toddler in the middle of Walmart who's just been told no about whatever is not happy about being told no, doesn't want to be told no.

and if that toddler is not under control, what does that toddler do? Throw himself down on the ground, hit the floor crying out loud. We see that and we go like, wow, there's something wrong with that.

[34 : 10] Most of the time we think to ourselves, well that parent will just take that kid out and whoop that kid. It's like, well, maybe, but also that parent needs to understand the reason that that kid's doing that is because that kid's a worshiper and that kid wanted that thing so much that it controlled his behavior.

So that's a contention that I make, okay? And I get that from things that Jesus says, right? He says, you brood of vipers, how can you being evil speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.

Our behavior flows from our heart. So he goes on to say the good man brings out of his good treasure what is good and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil. And the truth of it

is that we're all evil and even if we're saved, we're not immediately converted from evil to good. Like we're in a different kingdom but we still have work to be done, right? So you take that thought that our behavior comes out of our heart and then you begin to think about how temptation comes to us.

How sin and temptation comes to us. James says, let no one say when he's tempted I'm being tempted by God. For God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself does not tempt anyone. [35 : 33] But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lusts. So there's something in us first, a desire. A temptation comes to us externally and we latch on to it.

then when lust is conceived it gives birth to sin and when sin is accomplished it brings forth death. So each one is tempted when he's carried away and enticed by his lust. Then when lust has conceived it gives birth to sin and when sin is accomplished it brings forth death. So there's a pathway of getting to sin here, right? So the essence is this, we yield to this temptation.

We bow before this temptation. We worship this thing that we already want. And even though this verse is not telling us that, so think of temptation and the statue is the same.

The temptation wants you to bow, wants you to yield. Nebuchadnezzar wants you to bow to his statue. He threatens death if you don't.

[36 : 49] So you might think to yourself, how does our temptation threaten death? Well, it's interesting because Paul in Romans chapter 7 verses 14 through 23, and I'm not going to read all of it, I'm going to get right to the end.

He says in verse, in the very last verse, verse 23, let me get there. But I see a different law in the members of my body waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin, which is in my members.

In other words, when temptation comes to us and that thing is there inside of us and this thing outside of us and it's collecting together, wanting us to sin, wanting us to do something wrong, it is a battle and a war.

That's why it's hard not to do bad things. That's why it's hard not to do the wrong thing. Because there's a battle inside. And so what I'm saying then is that as these boys had to stay steadfast and not bow to the statue, we are supposed to fight against temptation to sin.

And there may be a cost to us by fighting that battle. As a matter of fact, I would say it maybe this way, that no matter what I'm missing out on, I cannot bow to the temptations of my heart.

[38 : 13] And let me see if I can put this into life for us. Let's just say that you over here, somebody tells you that you were talked about down at the cafe. And somebody spread your name around and they said all kinds of terribly disparaging things about you.

Now, maybe the temptation for you might be to just be all depressed and sad, but maybe, let's just go this direction, the temptation is to get angry and seek to get even.

And because the reason you want to is because your reputation is on the line. And someone is threatening to ruin your reputation. And your reputation is extremely important to you.

And if you don't submit to the temptation to get angry, to get even, then you might have your reputation ruined. Faithfulness says, God is greater and more lovely than my ruined reputation. Faithfulness says, God is greater and more lovely. And He's able to deliver me from a ruined reputation. But if He does not deliver me from a ruined reputation, let it be known, I will not bow to that temptation and seek revenge.

[39 : 41] So Christians, I'm saying to you, God is there to deliver us from the furnace of exile.

And sometimes that furnace is that temptation that we're facing. Second lesson is that God gives grace when we need it most. He gives grace when we need it most. When did He show up in this story?

This is not going to take us nearly as long to walk through. When did He show up and deliver His people? This story? At the right time?

Yeah. You think about that. They're accused. They're threatened. They're bound. They're thrown in. And it's once they are thrown in that God shows up.

Not a minute before. Not a minute after. As a matter of fact, their obedience gets them thrown into the furnace, but they live.

[40 : 46] And think about the soldiers. Their obedience to the King gets them killed. Because if you don't obey God, there's no hope for grace for you.

Right? You have to follow after Him. God gave them grace to face the trial not a minute before, not a minute after. Corrie ten Boom said, God pays the train ticket, but only right before you board the train.

In the Old Testament, the Israelites were told to gather manna. But you couldn't gather tomorrow's manna. I mean, on the Sabbath day, the day before, you had the double gathering.

But other days, no. And if you went out, that was a bad thing. Or if you tried to gather too much, right? It would go bad. The whole point of this is that as we face the future, we find out things and we worry about the future.

As a matter of fact, what is it, Matthew says, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will take care of itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. We try to worry about tomorrow, and we get fearful over that, maybe anxious over that, and today, I'm worried about it, and I'm going like, you know, what's God going to do?

[41 : 59] What's God got to do? And it's like, well, we don't know until tomorrow. You can't, now this is not advocating or arguing for not planning, but it's arguing for not allowing your heart to be captured by the anxiousness that would be there.

He will give you grace. You can find out, you can get the test results, and they're coming tomorrow. And those test results will show something terrible. And that means, in a few months, something more terrible that you've got to do.

And as you think about that more terrible thing, you begin to think about, say, the side effects, or the cost of it, or the difficulty that it's going to be.

And so today, before you even get the test results, you're already thinking six months down the road and things that you're going to go through, and the worry is there, and you wonder, well, where is God? And it's like, well, that hasn't happened yet.

Like, He's going to be there, and He's going to be there on time, but He's not going to be a moment early. And we're trying to spend tomorrow's grace on today on things that aren't even happening yet. And so God gives grace at the right time.

[43 : 10] And to expect God to relieve fear happening today about tomorrow is not understanding that God gives grace when it's needed. Third and final lesson is that God promises His presence.

I think this is fascinating. Isaiah was a prophet and he was in the southern kingdom, same place that these three children came from. He was in the reign of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and maybe into Manasseh just a little bit.

But these boys are two or three kings down the line. But they're familiar with who Isaiah is. As a matter of fact, I think this whole story, I think Daniel's kind of leaning a little bit on Isaiah and particularly this passage.

But now says the Lord, your creator, this is from 43, O Jacob and he who formed you, O Israel, do not fear for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name and you are mine.

When you pass through the waters I will be with you and through the rivers they will not overflow you. And when you walk through the fire you will not be scorched nor will the flames burn you.

[44 : 13] For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior, and I have given Egypt as your ransom and Cush and Seba in your place. He has promised not that they won't face the flood of disapproval from the world.

He has promised not that they won't face a fire of persecution for sticking to their convictions. He has promised not that they won't face a river of rejection from family as that family adopts the values of the world.

He has not promised that they won't face a flame of judgment from friends and family because they won't compromise their standards. He has promised you are going to go through those things and I will be with you.

You are going to go through the river. You are going to go through the fire. You are going to go through the flames and I will be with you. So, here is where this comes down to.

It comes down to this. How is your faith in God today? If faced with temptation, if faced with commands not to obey God, do you have the faith in God that says, even if you don't deliver me, I will still serve you?

[45 : 30] Do you feel your faith lagging? Maybe because it's just struggling right now because there's been so many hits one after another for you. Then let me just remind you to do three things.

Number one, remember God's power. Remember God's power. That's what these boys did. As they were facing down the flames, they just remembered that God can deliver them.

And that was enough for them. They remembered that He is powerful, He is strong, He is mighty. He is mighty to save, the song was saying. Remember God's power.

Go back and remind yourself of that. Secondly, rest in God's grace. God's grace is not a neon sign and it's not even a wind that blows, but God's grace is there when we don't even know it or feel it.

And so don't rest in your own ability and your performance to get through this thing, but rest in His grace. Also His faithfulness. Yeah.

[46 : 33] Yeah. And then the third, I was going to say, relish God's presence. Relish God's presence. He is with you in that. Whether you feel it or not, just know that He is because in His faithfulness, He's promised His presence and you can depend upon Him.

Remember His power, rest in His grace and relish in His presence. Okay. Well, let me pray for us. Father, thank you for the privilege it is to open your word.

And Lord, I thank you that you were faithful to your people and you've recorded this story for us to get a glimpse of your greatness and what it is to be faithful.

And I pray that you would help us. It's so easy to be unfaithful because there's so many things that come at us. And sometimes our faith is lagging.

Sometimes it's weak. weak. And so we just say as the Father of the Son, Lord, help our unbelief. Give us the courage that we need.

[47 : 45] Give us the strength we don't have. And help us to rest in your grace. And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.