

# Daniel 3:8-30

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[ 0 : 00 ] Pray with me as we stand. Father God, we pray that you would soften our hearts to hear your word.! Fill us with the fire of your presence that our minds would be illuminated and that we would believe.

! In Christ we ask. Amen. Please be seated. Friends, turn back with me to page 739 in the Pew Bible. Well, we're in a short sermon series in the book of Daniel and we're taking a look at the third chapter.

The book of Daniel was written by Daniel, a young Jewish exile living in Babylon in the 6th century BC. That's 2,500 years ago, give or take.

Babylon was massive, powerful, polytheistic, and idolatrous. And the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, had conquered the Jewish nation and he brought some of the Jewish people back to live as his subjects in Babylon.

And the experiences of Daniel and his friends recorded for us in this book proclaim a message of hope to all people living in exile even today.

[ 1 : 19 ] And in chapter 3, we see God's people, these three young men, under immense pressure. Bow the knee or burn in the oven.

It's an impossible choice. Certain physical death in the oven or spiritual death in idolatry. And yet, a simple confession of faith transforms everything.

Look with me. Verses 17 and 18. 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.

Everything in this story turns on this confession. A decree for self-glory at the beginning is turned into a decree for God's glory at the end.

[ 2 : 33 ] Lies and accusations at the beginning are turned into truth and vindication at the end. It all turns on the confession of faith in the living God.

And we know by the end, certain death is transformed into life and abundance for these three young men. So this confession at the center of the story, it shows us two truths about the living God.

It's verse 17 and 18. God alone is powerful. And God alone is worthy. That's the message that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego preached to us from 2,500 years ago.

And so would be the structure of the sermon this morning. So first, God alone is powerful. King Nebuchadnezzar thought he was all-powerful.

He was the king of the largest empire that the world had ever seen. He was the main player in culture and politics and social order. And he had misunderstood Daniel's message to him in chapter 2, if you were here last week.

[ 3 : 50 ] Daniel interpreted to the king his dream. He said, You, O king, are the head of gold. You rule over the children of man, over the beasts of the field, over the birds of heaven.

They are your domain, O king. Maybe Kenezer heard that part. But he didn't hear what Daniel said about the reason why.

It's because God had given him the kingdom. God is the true power behind all the powers in the universe.

Psalms 75. Set not up your horn on high, and speak not with a stiff neck. For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south.

And why? God is the judge. He putteth down, and he setteth up. Nebuchadnezzar sets up five times in the first half.

[ 4 : 56 ] He sets up his golden image that represents his glory. And he wanted to unite all his people around his power, so that he would be glorified.

And Nebuchadnezzar did have power. But it was a derived power. God had set him up. The power didn't really belong to him.

But Nebuchadnezzar was obsessed with his possession of this authority. And so he was prideful. Obsession with derived power leads to pride.

And pride in the thing borrowed leads to violence. Because possession is not secure. It has to be grasped at. It has to be protected at all costs.

So verse 13. Nebuchadnezzar's pride is inflamed. He's in a furious rage. When he hears that the Jews won't endorse his phony power.

[ 6 : 08 ] So the typical thing happens. He threatens violence. And when they resist, he punishes. Verse 19. He is filled with fury.

And he has the furnace set seven times hotter than usual. You see, his prideful arrogance is full grown. Seven is the number of perfection in Holy Scripture.

And the furnace. See, he had seven times hotter. Represents the absolute pinnacle of human power grasping at glory.

So what happens? Well, because of this confession of faith and a genuine fear of the living God, God rescues these three young men.

And the three are protected from death, yes. But not only that. Verse 27. The king and his authorities are astonished.

[ 7 : 11 ] And they say, 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. This week, my family and I were staying in a cabin just north of Princeton, B.C.

And one morning, there was a forest fire about two hours north of us. And we couldn't see the fire. We weren't in danger of the flames of the fire.

And yet the smoke came down and it saturated everything. Our clothes, our hair, all smelled of fire that was 200 kilometers away.

This is not mere protection. This is total and utter deliverance. These men were not subject to the elements of the earth.

[ 8 : 14 ] How? Well, God was present with them. The presence of God is the power behind all the powers of the world.

It is the fire which gives substance to all earthly fire. And the three young men were filled and surrounded by God's fiery presence.

So the flames of Nebuchadnezzar's prideful violence were nothing by comparison. God is the power behind all power in the universe.

So we can be faithful to him with reckless abandon. We can fear no man because if the Lord is with me, what can man do to me?

Confess your faith in him and he will make his home with you. And in his presence, you will not be touched by the fiery flames of violent, prideful men.

[ 9 : 24 ] You are free to put your faith into action in whatever way he calls you to be faithful. Because God is powerful.

That's the first point. And the second is this. That God is worthy of our worship. Now, it might be easy to think that God's power in his ability to save is what makes him worthy to be worshipped. But the truth is that God doesn't always work the miracle. Sometimes he allows the powers of evil men or sickness or natural disasters to win the day.

But God's worthiness isn't decided by whether he works the miracle. His worthiness comes from his character and his promises.

The three young men knew this. They were brought up as Jews. They were brought up in the faith and the fear of the living God. And we see this in the confession, verse 18.

[ 10 : 38 ] But if God doesn't save us, O King, be it known to you that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you've set up.

God alone is worthy of our worship. They believed this. We believed this. Because God's character and promises are revealed to us in Holy Scripture.

And it reveals that he is worthy. Alone he is worthy. So what's God's character? He is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

Keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. But who will by no means clear the guilty.

God is loving and merciful and just. This is how he revealed himself to Adam, to Noah, to Abraham, to Joseph, to Moses, and on and on and on.

[ 11 : 47 ] And this is who God revealed himself to be, to Shadrach, to Meshach, and to Abednego. They had been brought up in the fear and the faith of the living God.

And in their moment of crisis, they confessed their faith. And God, once again, revealed his love and his mercy to them. Not only by saving them from the fire, because that would have been enough.

But by expressing his kindness and compassion by saving them in the midst of the fire. He comes down and makes himself present with them in the flames.

He is the fourth angelic figure in the furnace with them. This is God's loving presence that keeps them and hymns them in.

And this makes total sense if you know the living God. It's his character. It's who he is. The most high makes himself low to be with us in suffering.

[ 13 : 01 ] That's the God of the Bible. And so the question, is this Christ Jesus in the furnace with the three young men?

Of course it is. It's God's presence made manifest for the protection and comfort of his faithful people. And that reality of God's nature was made fully known to us in the face of Jesus.

So friends, this means that if you trust in Christ, God is with you in suffering. And by faith in Jesus, God is walking alongside you in whatever fiery furnace you're facing.

And this makes him worthy of our worship. And just as I finish, God is worthy of our worship because of his promises.

He had promised rescue and salvation and deliverance. And this is a sure thing. And we can bet our lives on it. God won't always work the miracle.

[ 14 : 16 ] Sometimes cancer will take the lives of our family and our friends. Sometimes our hearts will fail and we will fall.

Sometimes fires and floods will sweep our bodies away. But again, the three young men give us the model of faith.

They were absolutely sure of his ability to save. But they would not presume about what he would do. Why?

It's because they trusted in his plans. They knew that his promise of salvation is eternally sure.

The circumstances, the cares, the troubles of this life will not carry on into eternity. Our Lord Jesus tells us in Matthew 10, Do not fear the one who has control over your body in this life.

[ 15 : 24 ] But fear the one who has charge over your body and your eternal soul. This life can be taken, but the promises of Jesus Christ are eternally secure.

And that gives us a holy indifference to our earthly circumstances. So that we can pursue God's purposes, even if that means giving up our life for him in faithfulness.

So we can be faithful to God without fear. Because the promise is sure. Saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will carry us through the fires and the flames of this world and into eternity with our God.

The call of Daniel chapter 3 is trust God and simply be obedient. His promises are sure.

And as the prophet Habakkuk said, If the vision's fulfillment seems slow, wait for it. Because he's with you. Amen.

[ 16 : 36 ] Amen.