

# A Quiet Confidence in God

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Date: 16 May 2021

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[ 0 : 00 ] The scripture reading comes from Daniel, chapter 3. Please follow along on the screen or the bulletin.

Starting in verse 1, we read, King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was 60 cubits and his breadth 6 cubits.

He set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent together the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counsellors, the treasurers, the justice, the magistrates and all the officials of the province to come to the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up.

Then the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counsellors, 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. 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.

[ 1 : 28 ] 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 worshipped the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Therefore, at that time, certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the jewels. They declared 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. Then Nebuchadnezzar, in fierce rage, commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought.

[ 2 : 51 ] So they brought these men before the king. So they said, And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?

They 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. Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed against them.

He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated. Then he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind them 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.

[ 4 : 36 ] And these three men fell bound into the burning fiery furnace. 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 near.

Then they 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.

Their hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them. 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 yield up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own god.

[ 6 : 06 ] 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 lay in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way.

Then the king promoted them in the province of Babylon. This is the word of God. Great. Thank you, Soda and Echo. Good morning, everybody.

It is great to see you, and it's great to see so many faces we haven't seen for months and months. It really is wonderful to see you again. If you are new to Watermark this morning, my name is Kevin, and I'm one of the leaders here.

It's great to be with you this morning. Let's pray briefly and ask God to come and speak to us from His word. So, Heavenly Father, as we come before you this morning, we come to your word, God, because your word is living and active, because the scriptures are not merely the invention of man. They are your words which are breathed out by you, God. They are given to us for our good, that we may know you, that we may live the life you've called us to live. And so, God, we come to your word this morning because we want to hear from you.

[ 7 : 23 ] We haven't come just to hear the opinions of man. We haven't come to hear a motivational talk. We've come to hear from the living God. And so, as we ponder and reflect on your word, won't you speak to us?

Won't you encourage us? God, won't you breathe courage into us this morning? For those of us, God, who faith is faltering, for those of us that are facing the challenges of living in a broken world, for those of us, God, that are facing the temptation of compromise, won't you breathe courage and conviction into our hearts this morning, we pray.

We pray this in your glorious and your wonderful name. Amen. Amen. Sorry, again, if you're at the community center or at home, welcome to you as well.

Now, we are working our way through the book of Daniel, and we're about halfway through the series. And the book of Daniel is all about, really, the kingdoms of the world and which kingdom is ultimately gonna last.

And last week, Chris shared Daniel 2 with us. There's that amazing picture of the various statues. And the big idea is that, though there are lots of kingdoms in this world, ultimately there is one king.

[ 8 : 32 ] His kingdom is gonna last for all eternity. That is the kingdom of God in the person of Jesus. And so that's really what the book of Daniel is all about. And then the book of Daniel asks us, in light of that, those of us that are followers of Jesus, to live lives of faithfulness, knowing that God is sovereign.

Remember the two main themes, sovereignty and faithfulness? God is sovereign, we are not. God is faithful, and therefore we can be faithful to him. Now, up until this point in Daniel, things have gone pretty well for Daniel and for his friends, for God's people.

They have gone to Babylon, not their first choice, but God took them there. They've been enrolled in the king's college. They had a kind of issue with the king's food, but they got through that all right. And then in chapter two, Nebuchadnezzar, the king, has this dream, and his insecurity gets the better of him, and so he makes this reckless decision. He says, all the wise men, all the astrologers, are to be eliminated, destroyed.

And God, in his mercy, gives Daniel and his friends insight. God delivers them, and they are saved, and they come out, and actually at the end of the story, they are promoted to these high-ranking

positions in Israel.

[ 9 : 50 ] And so up until now, things have actually been going pretty all right. Their faithfulness to God has been good for them. But that's about a change. Because in chapter three, their faithfulness to God lands them in a bunch of trouble.

And so, what we come to today is actually what every follower of Jesus, and those that are exploring the claims of Christ, will come to at some point in their life.

And that is that following Jesus means that inevitably, we are going to face the fire. That could be in your professional life, it could be in your personal life, it could be relationally. Those that want to be faithful to Christ, will end up facing the fire.

And so the question that Daniel 3 wants to ask us is, how do we become the kind of people that get the courage and the conviction to stand firm in the midst of the fire?

And so that's really the main point of Daniel 3. This is what God wants us to see today. That following God will involve trouble. It will often invite opposition. But God's people are called to have courage and conviction, knowing that only God can deliver those who trust Him.

[ 11 : 03 ] And so let's dive in and see what's going on here. And so the story starts off with Nebuchadnezzar building this massive golden statue. And the statue is probably of the god Nebo, the Babylonian god.

And Nebuchadnezzar does this for a couple of reasons. The one is that he's trying to consolidate power in his kingdom. He's trying to unify all the people in Babylon.

Remember, the Babylonian empire was kind of the new superpower of the world. They had conquered all sorts of nations, Assyria, Israel, the Medes, a whole bunch. And so Babylon was actually quite a diverse empire.

There were people of all sorts of beliefs and religions and backgrounds. And that was okay. But Nebuchadnezzar wants to unify these around one central image, the image of his god Nebo.

Remember, Nebuchadnezzar is named after Nebo. Nebuchadnezzar is his name. And so this is an act of unification in the nation. But the other reason why he does this, remember the dream that he has in chapter 2 of this massive statue and Daniel says, you, O Nebuchadnezzar, are the head of gold.

[ 12 : 12 ] But after you, there's going to come another empire of silver and bronze, etc., etc. And Nebuchadnezzar hears this and he's thinking, wait, you're saying that I'm only around for a limited period of time and then someone's going to come and conquer my empire?

Not if I've got anything to do with it. And so what he does is he sets up the statue where the whole thing is gold. Head, torso, legs, body. And what he's trying to do is he's saying my kingdom is going to be an everlasting kingdom.

Daniel, you said I'm only around for 50 years, 70 years. Forget that. I'm here to stay. In my Babylonian kingdom, I'm here to last. And so what he's trying to do is build this almost eternal monument to his reign that forever people will know Nebuchadnezzar was here.

He reigned and his kingdom lasts forever. And so one of the things that we're meant to see here is this statue that Nebuchadnezzar builds is not just an example of cultural mythology.

This is Nebuchadnezzar trying to establish himself, trying to set himself up as almost a godlike figure. He's trying to say I am God. He's trying to set up this monument to his glory.

[ 13 : 25 ] Really. And I don't know if you remember this in Daniel chapter 2 that Chris showed us last week. After Daniel and his friends they have this vision in the night, they understand what the dream that Nebuchadnezzar has means.

Daniel prays this amazing prayer. Look at what he says. I think we've got it on the screen in verse 20. He says this. Blessed be the name of God forever and ever. God to whom belongs wisdom and night.

He changes times and season. God removes kings and sets up kings. Okay, so Daniel prays this prayer. Chapter 2. God is the one who sets up kings and removes kings.

Well, I don't know if you picked up in the passage that Echo and Soda read to us how many times it talks about Nebuchadnezzar setting up this image of God. I think we've got it on the screen here. In six times in just the one paragraph it talks about it.

He says, Nebuchadnezzar made this image. He set it up on the plains of Dura. At the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar set up. The image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. They stood before the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

[ 14 : 28 ] They worshipped the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Again and again, it's almost ironic, it's almost meant to be read satirically, how often it tells us that Nebuchadnezzar has set up the statue and what we meant to remember is in the chapter before Daniel says, actually there's only one God that really sets up kings and that is the eternal God.

And so what we meant to see here is Nebuchadnezzar is trying to be like God. He's trying to set himself up on the throne of the world. He is the one on the throne of the superpower of the world and he's trying to say, I am God.

And of course that means that not long, it's not long before these three Jewish God-fearing men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are going to get into trouble because they do not bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's God.

And so some Babylonians take some issue with this and they come before Nebuchadnezzar in verse 8 and they bring this accusation. And verse 8 says that they maliciously accused Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

And verse 12 we are told that they go to Nebuchadnezzar and they say this, that say these guys that you have brought from Israel, they are a danger to society. They accuse them of intolerance and bigotry, of undermining the social good.

[ 15 : 45 ] They say these guys are a danger to your kingship. They're a danger to our society. They are espousing views that we don't agree with and they bring this accusation against God's people.

And so look at what happens in verse 13. Verse 13 says, Then Nebuchadnezzar in a furious rage, he's mad that these men have dared to defy him.

He commands that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be brought in. And of course this sets up the drama of the passage. One of the things we may need to see here is that favor in Babylon is always short-lived.

And you are not meant to build your life on it or bank your life on it. When we get favor with society, that's not a bad thing. We can thank God for it. Remember, Jesus grew in favor with man and with God.

It's not a bad thing. But favor with the world is always fickle. It's always superficial. And Daniel wants to show us that we shouldn't bank our life on the favor of the things of this world.

[ 16 : 50 ] And so Nebuchadnezzar calls these guys in and he says, Listen, I've got a proposition for you. If you will just bow down to my idol and my image, all will be well and good. We'll just forget this whole unfortunate affair and let's just go on with life as it is.

But if not, the fiery furnace awaits you. Friends, for those of us that are followers of Jesus or maybe you're looking into the claims of Christianity, maybe you're still on a spiritual journey towards faith, we need to reckon with the biblical teaching that those of us that are followers of Jesus, those of us that are Christians, Christ is supreme in the heart of followers of Jesus.

And part of what it means to be a follower of Jesus is that we don't join in with the worship that our world espouses. That doesn't mean that we don't love our city, we don't serve our city.

Remember, one of the points of Daniel is that God calls God's people into Babylon to put down their roots, to love and serve the city. So we should not be those that withdraw from Hong Kong and are antagonistic or always blaming or accusing or telling the government how bad they are.

No, no, we have to love and serve our city. But as followers of Jesus, because Christ is first and supreme in our hearts, that means we won't worship the things that our city worships.

[ 18 : 14 ] We won't join in the worship of our city. As Christians, one of the ways that we seek the good of the city is by not necessarily seeking its favor and its praise, but by not joining in the worship of our city, but by courageously and faithfully living for God even in the midst of the city.

And so one of the ways that we actually serve and seek the welfare of our city is not to blend in with our city and just go with the flow, but to love our city by being faithful and standing firm for him as we serve our city and seek its welfare.

And that necessarily means that at times followers of Jesus will be misunderstood. At times we'll be accused of things. There's this amazing verse in 2 Timothy chapter 3.

This is a verse that's worth memorizing where Paul writes to this young pastor Timothy and he says, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ will be persecuted.

And that means you just need to reckon with the fact that if you're going to be faithful to Jesus you will not always be understood or praised or admired. James chapter 4 says, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity with God?

[ 19 : 31 ] And James is not saying that as Christians we should always pick a fight with our world and always try and accuse it of all sorts of things. but he's saying that you can't serve the idols of our city and try and serve Jesus.

You can't love money and love God. You can't give yourself to the sexual ethic of our world and give yourself to Jesus. Those two things are incompatible.

But that's what Nebuchadnezzar wants, right? Nebuchadnezzar nowhere says to the Jews, listen, stop worshipping Yahweh, you've got to worship me alone. He nowhere tells them that they can't be Jews.

He says, no, you can continue worshipping. You can continue praying to Yahweh. That's fine. Just as long as you bow down to my statue as well. And if you think about it, I wonder just how easy it might have been for these followers of God's people to justify it themselves.

They could have said things like, well, you know, God has put us in positions of influence. Who else is going to witness to Nebuchadnezzar if we die in the furnace? I mean, God has put us here for a reason.

[ 20 : 35 ] They could have said, listen, if we don't bow down, we're going to offend the Babylonians and then who's going to tell them about Yahweh? I mean, actually, for the sake of witness, we better just bow down and not offend them.

If it was me, I think I probably would have said something like, I'll bow down with my body, but in my heart, I'll really be standing up, right? No, friends, what these men do is they somehow find the courage and the conviction to go against the flow and that means that they are called to face the fire.

And so once again, we're faced with this question, where do we find the courage? Where do we find the conviction to become the men and the women of God that will not look for a fight, but stand in the face of the fire?

Well, look briefly at the very last few verses of Daniel chapter 3. Look at verse 28 with me. This is after they've kind of come through the fire and Nebuchadnezzar says this amazing thing.

He says, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, for they trusted in Him. That's the key word. They trusted in Him and set aside the king's command.

[ 21 : 48 ] It's amazing that they are commended by the king for defying the king. That's quite an amazing thing. Yielding up their bodies rather than serving and worshipping my God.

One of the things that I think we're meant to see here is that courage and conviction to face the fire is not a matter of personality and it's not a matter of natural bravery but rather it's courage that's born out of trust.

Notice that we know very little about these three men. We know nothing about their personality. Were they introverts or were they extroverts? Were they go-getter A-type leaders or were they quiet followers?

In the book of Daniel it seems that Daniel really is the kind of main character and these guys are, they follow his lead. But we don't actually know anything about their personalities at all. And I think what God wants to show us here is that courage and conviction is not a matter of personality, type, or your upbringing.

It's born out of a quiet confidence, a trust in who God is and what he's done for us. Some of us may feel like I'm never going to be a bold leader, someone who stirs things up and makes a change in society.

[ 23 : 08 ] That's okay. But if you can find the quiet confidence that comes from knowing who God is, God can use you. And you may face the fire but God will give you the courage to stand firm.

And so let's look at verses 15 to 18. We're going to focus on that for a little bit. We're going to find three things, of course three things. You're only allowed three points in a sermon. And so three things that these guys found that gave them the courage and the conviction to stand.

And so the first one is this, they somehow knew the power of God. Look at verse 15 with me.

Nebuchadnezzar brings these guys in and he once again tells them about all the musical instruments and he says, if you will fall down and worship the image that I've made, well and good. We'll just put this inconvenient situation behind us. We'll just pretend it didn't happen. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning, fiery furnace.

And who is the God that will deliver you out of my hands? What Nebuchadnezzar is really saying is who is powerful enough for you to deliver you from my great power, my authority?

[ 24 : 23 ] And these three men very simply just say, well God is. They answer him very matter-of-factly. Look at what they say in verse 16. Oh Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter.

And what that means really is there's no discussion. We don't even need to debate it. The simple matter of the fact is God is able to deliver us. God is strong enough. We know that you are powerful. We know that in a human sense you are the most powerful man in the whole world. We know that you have supreme authority. But you are not the supreme authority in the entire world. God is. And what these men know is that though Nebuchadnezzar is supremely powerful in one sense, even his power and his authority has been granted by him, by God, the one true and supreme authority one.

What these men know is that Nebuchadnezzar is only there because God has put him on the throne. Remember, it's God who sets up kings. It's God who sets up kingdoms.

[ 25 : 26 ] It's God who gives life and takes away life. It's God's air that they breathe. It's God who upholds the universe by the word of his power. The God that they serve is the God who has faithfully looked after his people.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The one who has delivered his people from Egypt and from Pharaoh's grasp. The one who delivered his people through the Red Sea and brought them into Promised Land. The God that they serve is the God that has brought them out of Palestine and into Babylon at this time.

And God is supreme and on the throne. And so Nebuchadnezzar looks at them and says, who is able to deliver you? Who is as powerful as I am? And they simply say, well, God is.

Well, God is. And so friends, the question for us is, what do we think of God? Maybe more importantly is what do you feel about God?

Do you know that God really is the one supreme authority on the throne? Do we know that not just intellectually in our heads but in our hearts? One of the secrets of the Christian life is to be able to bring our theology, what we believe about God, to bear on the reality of our lives so that it actually impacts our lives in the day-to-day reality of life.

[ 26 : 47 ] Carl Johnson points out that one of the things that these men do so well is they compare the thing that's intimidating them, in this case, Nebuchadnezzar, with who God is. And they actually do the mental exercise and say, well, let's compare these two and they come out knowing God is supremely authoritative.

It's one thing to know theoretically that God is powerful, that God created the universe, but courage and conviction are not just born out of what we know theoretically or theologically, it's actually what we believe deep in our hearts.

And so the secret of the Christian life is to bring that to bear on our life. And so friends, maybe we can ask you this morning, what is it that you find intimidating or scary?

What person, what circumstance, what scenario that you play out in your mind, what institution intimidates you, makes you feel afraid? Friends, God wants you to know that those things may be powerful, but that your life is not in their hands.

Your life is in the hands of the sovereign God. And so these men, they know the power of God. The second thing they know is the sovereign wisdom of God. Now, this is quite amazing. Look at verse 18 with me.

[ 27 : 58 ] Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego obviously have this incredible trust in God's power for when Nebuchadnezzar says, who is powerful enough to deliver you out of my hands?

They say, well, God is. And so look at how they say it in verse 18. They say, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from your hands. Sorry, from the fiery furnace.

And he will deliver us out of your hands, O king. But then look at verse 18. But if not, be it known to you, O Nebuchadnezzar, we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you've set up.

So look at what they say here. On the one hand, they say, we know that God is able to save us. We know that God will deliver us out of your hands. But even if he doesn't, that's okay.

We know that God is still sovereign, in charge, and glorious and on the throne. In other words, what they're saying is, even more than God's power and his ability, even more than that, their confidence is born out of a faith that in God's sovereign wisdom, he knows what he's doing even if the outcome that God does is not what they would have chosen.

[ 29 : 15 ] They're saying, we know God is able to deliver us. We know God will deliver us from your hands. But even if he doesn't, we still know that God is good, that he's faithful, that he's sovereign, that he's on the throne, and that he is trustworthy.

Friends, they know that he's good. They know that he's faithful. They know that he's powerful. But what they don't know is how God will choose to act in this particular circumstance.

Do you see that? And yet, their faith is steadfast. They do not waver in unbelief. And that means that they're not tying their view to who God is, nor they're tying their faithfulness to God to any particular outcome.

Their faith in who God is rests simply in who he is, not in a particular outcome that they do or do not want. And that's really what faith is. Faith means trusting God for being God, not because he will give us an outcome that we particularly want or desire.

We actually see the same thing in Acts chapter 12. In Acts chapter 12, this amazing situation. King Herod is persecuting the Christians, because they're causing trouble, they're turning the city upside down.

[ 30 : 30 ] And so two apostles, James and Peter, are arrested and thrown into jail. And James has his head cut off. He's beheaded, right? That's the end.

And it says that when Herod saw how the crowds loved this, he decided to do the same thing to Peter. But miraculously, that night, an angel arrives in the prison, opens up the prison doors, sets Peter free, and Peter is a free man.

And the chapter ends with Herod dying and Peter living. Okay? So it starts off, James dies, Peter's on the way to dying, Herod dies, and Peter gets set free.

You following? Now here's the question. Why does James die and Peter lives? I mean, did James not have enough faith? Did he not pray enough?

Was he not courageous enough? Did he not trust God enough? No friends, that's not the answer. The answer is, God in his sovereign wisdom knew what he was doing.

[ 31 : 29 ] And Shadrach, Bishak, and Abednego know the same thing here. They've got a desired outcome. We hope we'll be delivered. We know God is able to deliver us.

We know that God will deliver us from your hands, O Nebuchadnezzar. That may happen through saving us from the furnace. It may happen by dying in the furnace and going to glory. God will deliver us from your hands.

But what we don't know is how God will act in this circumstance. And yet we'll still trust him.

Because we know that he is faithful. Friends, I wonder what you're facing right now.

I wonder if you want to just take a moment to think about what is the thing that you're facing. Will you trust him? Will you commit to trusting him no matter the outcome?

Not just when things work out the way that we want, but to trust him for who he is. He's faithful. He's sovereign.

[ 32 : 31 ] He's all-powerful. He's loving and he's gracious. We can trust him. We can trust him. These men trust God's power and they trust God's sovereign wisdom.

But I want to put to us today that these two things, this knowing in our minds God's power and his sovereignty, is not the main reason why we make compromises and why we struggle for courage and conviction in the face of the fire.

I don't know what kind of fire you may be facing. It may be, or what kind of compromises you may be tempted with. For some of us, maybe you're dating someone and they want to pressurize you to move in together or to sleep together before marriage.

And your boyfriend or your girlfriend is pressurizing you and saying, oh, if you really loved me, what's going to give you the courage to stand firm? Maybe professionally, your boss is putting pressure on you to make an unethical decision or to compromise somehow.

And it seems like if you stand up to your boss, it's the end of your career. What's going to give us, what is the reason why we are tempted to compromise? Many of us will know that God is powerful.

[ 33 : 51 ] We know that God is sovereign. It's not our theology that's the problem. There's something else going on in our lives that leads us to want to compromise in the face of great pressure.

When the fire comes and we are faced with the furnace, what is it that really causes us to surrender? Well, as we've heard so many times, our behavior and our decisions are far more shaped by what our hearts love than what our heads know.

And that means that the reason for our compromises is not just that we don't know enough theology, it's that our hearts long to feel secure, to feel safe, to feel affirmed, to be praised by others.

And so the longing of our hearts actually often leads us to decisions more than the theology of our heads. The real reason why we often fail to do what's right, to stand for what's true, to confront what's wrong, is because actually there's more of Nebuchadnezzar inside of us than we acknowledge or we like to admit.

I know that might sound a little intense, but just think about how much money, how much energy, how much time, how much attention do we give, or our city gives, to cultivating our own image, or to seeking the affirmation and the approval of others?

[ 35 : 16 ] How much effort and time goes into cultivating our image on social media, or maybe our professional image, our CV, or our professional, yeah, image in the marketplace? And so in many ways, we actually can try and build up this idol, this image, much like Nebuchadnezzar.

Or just, I don't know if you noticed, twice, it talks about how Nebuchadnezzar, in furious rage, is angry because things don't go his way. Friends, do I need to ask how many of us have got angry recently when things have not gone our way?

When maybe a junior or subordinate has defied us? Or maybe our children have gone against us? And if I'm honest, there's more of Nebuchadnezzar in my heart than I like to admit.

As one pastor put it, it's not just that we live in a culture of idolatry, it's actually that we are idolaters ourselves. And so what that means, really, is that we don't just need to know the power of God and the sovereignty of God and the wisdom of God.

Ultimately, we need to know the man of God. The man of God who went into the fire with us and the man of God who went into the fire for us. And so look at the third thing. The power of God, the wisdom of God, the man of God.

[ 36 : 29 ] And so look at what happens in verse 24. Nebuchadnezzar has never experienced such defiance before. He's not used to people speaking to him like this. And so filled with this furious rage, he orders the furnace to get heated up to the max.

And Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego get what they ask for. And so they are bound up by rope, they tied up, and they are thrown into the furnace. And in verse 24, look what happens.

Nebuchadnezzar takes up his position to see these suckers burn. And to his great astonishment, he sees them walking around in the furnace, unbound and unharmed. And so look at what it says.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished. He rose up in haste. He said to his counselors, Did we not cast three men bound into the fire? They answered and said to the king, That's true, O Lord, we did.

He answered and said, But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they do not seem to be hurt. And the appearance of the fourth is like one of the sons of the gods.

[ 37 : 34 ] Having thrown these guys into the furnace to his amazement, Nebuchadnezzar sees that they are not only not hurt, they are not only alive and well, but there is some divine, some angelic being that is in the furnace with them.

And Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego realize that whoever this being is, his presence in the furnace is the reason why they are delivered. In fact, that's the conclusion that Nebuchadnezzar comes to.

Look at, I think it's verse 28, he says, God sent his angel and delivered these servants who trusted in him. Nebuchadnezzar realizes whoever this being is, whoever this angel or this divine being is, his presence in the furnace has rescued them, has saved them, has delivered them.

God has sent a man to save his people. And friends, that of course is the message of the Bible. Because God has sent a man, the Lord Jesus Christ, to save his people, to rescue his people, to deliver all those who will trust in him.

Friends, the Bible teaches us that the way that God would save us is not just by sending Jesus into the fire with us, but ultimately sending Jesus into the fire for us.

[ 38 : 57 ] Jesus Christ went to the cross clothed with our sin and our shame, with my sin and with your shame. Jesus was not just bound with ropes, he was nailed to the very cross.

And Jesus there on the cross faced the full fury, the furnace of God's righteous anger and his just judgment. for all the sins of the world.

Jesus didn't just face the fury of Nebuchadnezzar or Herod or Pontius Pilate or Caesar Augustus. Jesus faced the wrath of the righteous God for our sins, my sins and your sins, for my idolatry and for your idolatry.

And friends, the great problem that we face is not just the opposition and the persecution from people like Nebuchadnezzar or your boss or your parents or your boyfriend, the great problem that we face is not just that we are facing persecution because we've stood up to some tyrant, because we have done some good.

The great problem that humanity faces is that we have turned our back on God. We have worshipped created things rather than the creator himself. We've rejected God and now we are destined for eternal hell and judgment.

[ 40 : 10 ] We've set ourselves up like Nebuchadnezzar as our own gods. We have loved rather than serving and loving the one true God. And that means that ultimately all of us should face the fire of God's wrath.

But of course the whole point of the Bible is that God sent a man. God sent not just an angelic being, not just one like the sons of the gods, he sent his son himself, Jesus Christ, the righteous one, to come and to save and to deliver those who will trust in him.

And so what that means is that now when we face the fire, when we face the temptation, when we are tempted to compromise and to, when we are tempted to bow down to the things that when the pressure is on, what that means is we can look to the one who's gone to the fire for us.

What it means is that when God does bring trials into our life, we know that Jesus has gone and faced the ultimate fire. And our confidence to stand firm in him can give us the confidence to stand firm and to stand up to the temptations of this world.

Friends, we don't need to preserve ourselves. We don't need to save ourselves. We don't need to get angry or scared or frustrated when things don't go our way, when people refuse us. We don't need to establish a name for ourselves or establish an image for ourselves or build up our image because our life is not in our hands.

[ 41 : 37 ] Our life is in the hands of the one who has gone to the fire for us. Friends, because Jesus went into the fire for us, he gives us a name. He gives us a status.

He gives us an identity. He gives us a favor that no compromise in this world can ever give you.

That no compromise with this world will ever secure for you.

That no concession that we're tempted to make will ever give you. Jesus gives that to you and that means that we can stand firm in the flame. And so, Julian read it to us earlier but look at what Isaiah 43 says.

God says this, Fear not 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. Through the rivers they will not overwhelm you.

When you walk through the fire you will not be burnt. When the flames come around you they will not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

[ 42 : 41 ] Friends, following Jesus will necessarily involve trouble. It will at times invite opposition and persecution. But God's people are called to have courage and conviction.

God's people are called to stand firm knowing and trusting that only God can deliver us and save those who trust in Him. Let's pray together.

Lord Jesus Christ we are so grateful for you the one who delivers us from the fire and the furnace of true affliction.

Jesus, every one of us here this morning in many ways are facing our own temptations. God, we like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego day in and day out.

God, in the marketplace, at work, at home, in relationships and our finances are tempted, God, to compromise and to trust the systems of this world.

[ 43 : 41 ] We tempted, God, to add a little bit of worship of the things of this world to you. But God, we need you. And so God, I pray, won't you build our faith?

God, won't you give us the courage and the conviction? Won't you open our eyes to see you for who you are? God, won't you help us to see that you, Jesus, went to the fire for us and now promised to walk through the fire with us.

Jesus, won't you help us to see your supreme power and authority? And God, I pray for those of us here this morning that are struggling, that are maybe in the very midst of grappling with whether to

make these compromises, concessions.

Christ, won't you come and fill us with your spirit and help us to see you and know you for who you really are. Jesus, we desperately need you and we need your Holy Spirit.

So come and have your way in our life and in our hearts we pray. Friends, maybe just let's take a moment and just ask Christ to come and give you courage and conviction.

[ 45 : 04 ] Come and give you the faith that you need to walk with Him through the challenges that you face. It's not just the theology that we need, it's actually the Spirit doing a work in our hearts.

Holy Spirit, come with you. come and help us we pray. Come and help us we pray.