



# DANIEL

## DETERMINING TO GO GOD'S WAY – SPIRITUAL LIVING IN A SECULAR WORLD

### Session 3 – Chapter 3

#### Faith and the fiery trial

4. In what ways can “tolerance” become an idol? What is the difference between tolerance and promotion of a belief or lifestyle? What are some of the greater challenges believers face today in standing up for what they believe in?
  
5. How will Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego's example encourage you if you are faced with the possibility of losing your job or being rejected by friends because of your refusal to compromise God's Word?
  
6. Why did the three men suddenly choose to obey the king's orders after being tossed in the furnace when they didn't obey earlier (vv. 26)? How can we know when it's right to challenge authority and when it's proper to obey? What guidelines should believers use in determining the proper response?

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7. What are some of the “idols” you bow down to? What makes it difficult for you to stand against these influences? What might Daniel say to you about standing up when the rest of the world bows down? What are some practical steps you can take to be stronger in the face of these idols?
8. What commitments can you make to the Lord today that will prepare you to face the pressures of the secular culture around you?

#### REFLECTION – GOING FORWARD

- Think of **ONE or TWO** things that you have learned that you'd like to work on in the coming week.
  - *You can list these things on page one of your study binder titled Going Forward.*
  - ***Remember that this is all about QUALITY, not QUANTITY. It's better to work on one specific area of life and do it well than to work on many and do poorly (or to be so overwhelmed that you simply don't try).***
- Reflect on the idols you struggle with. Name them and consider what it is that draws you to bow down to them instead of trusting God. Talk with a trusted friend or pastor about how you can become stronger in your faith so you can face the idols without bowing down to them.
  - *You can list these things on page two of your study binder titled Application under Session Three.*
- Invite God to work on your mind and heart in those areas you've previously noted. Be honest about your desires and fears, consider writing them down.

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#### TRUE FAITH – GROUP DISCUSSION

*Look for ways to put into practice the things you wrote down on page 1. Talk with other group members about your ideas and commit to being accountable to one another.*

*During the coming week, ask the Holy Spirit to continue to reveal truth to you from what you've read and studied.*

#### 1 Peter 4:12-19

- Can our faith be put to the test and bring glory to God?
- (1-3)** We read in chapter 3 that Nebuchadnezzar made a massive image of gold.
  - Maybe as a result of the dream we read about in the last chapter, the king was not satisfied only being a head of gold so he created an entire image of gold.
- He sends messengers to bring back the commanding officials of his empire for the dedication of the great golden image.
  - These men would be the representatives for the people back home.\*\*
  - These men were:
    - Princes – chief administrative officers
    - Governors were likely their assistants or military commanders
    - Captains ruled over the smaller districts in the provinces
    - Judges were their advisers
    - Treasurers served as they do today
    - Counselors were law experts
    - Sheriffs were local judges and magistrates
    - And rulers were the miscellaneous officials in the province
- This was not just a political gathering but a religious one also. Nebuchadnezzar's planned unification was through fear and religion. Fall down and worship or die in the fiery furnace.
  - This gathering was complete with worship music, the word worship appears at least 11 times in this chapter.
  - Music can be used as a powerful tool of the Lord or a destructive weapon of Satan.
  - It has power to stir a person's thoughts and emotions.
  - Historically music has played a role in strengthening nationalism, motivating conquest, and inspiring people to act.
    - As a note: the recent UN gathering commenced with Andrea Bocelli. Now I know we are all men in this room, but anyone who has heard this man's voice can appreciate just how moving it is, how emotional those melodies can be, and what a powerful tool it could be.
- (4-11)** When you hear the music fall down and worship...or die! Simple...
  - Well for these superstitious Babylonians, it was another day at the races, just a day as any day, a walk in the park for them. They bowed to so many idols this was just another one on the list.
  - They are plainly concerned with survival, they'll do anything to escape death and danger.
  - A devilish philosophy, **Job 2:4 "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life."**

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- Quite the opposite of our faith, *John 12:24-26* <sup>24</sup> ***Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.*** <sup>25</sup> ***He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.*** <sup>26</sup> ***If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.***
- **(12-18)** The three men exhibited true faith and would not bow
  - They knew the commandments of God
  - Their submission to the idol would also represent all of the Babylonian Jews in captivity.
  - Their true faith was not frightened by threats or impressed by the crowds and those in attendance. True faith obeys the Lord and trusts Him to work out the consequences.
- **(13-15)** So here we see Nebuchadnezzar once again in a fit of anger, though a conqueror of cities and nations he could not control or conquer himself. ***“Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city” Prov 16:32***
- **(16-18)** Yet the three Hebrew officers were calm and collected and respectful, ***“Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” 1 Pet 3:15***
  - ---Read vv.16-18
  - They could have searched for a loophole, bow physically, but not in their hearts, but they didn't because:
    - True faith does not look for loopholes; it obeys God and knows He will do what's best.
    - Times of adversity are times of opportunity
    - Commercial faith says their needs to be a reward, but that isn't the case here.
    - True faith exhibited here confesses the Lord and obeys Him regardless of the outcome.
    - Read Hebrews 11 which lists the names and deeds of great men and women of faith including these three.
- **(19-30)**
  - Well now the officials get their possible revenge, never mind that they saved their lives in the last chapter, but all is not as it seems.
  - 3 thrown into the furnace used for smelting ore, but 4 appear and they are protected.
  - Interesting how they disobeyed the order to bow, but obeyed they order to come out of the furnace. They were miracles and wanted everyone to know how great their God is!
    - This act of faith was an inspiration for those in Daniel's day, for our day, and for the future up until the day the Lord returns.

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True faith as displayed by these three young men in chapter 3 begins with a Dilemma...

Dilemma: To bow or not to bow (vv. 13-18)

- The enemy seeks to take us off of our course by any temptation possible, “Submit to God and resist the devil and he will flee from you.” Jas 4:7
- These three men knew the Scriptures and knew their God intimately. They kept the Lord’s commandments but also knew that the Lord could choose to save them from the furnace if it was His will. **Ps 121:7 “The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul.” Isa 26:4 “Trust in the LORD forever, for in YAH, the LORD, is everlasting strength.”**
- The dilemma allowed for both a deceptive and destructive temptation which they resisted.
  - Deceptive: It would have been fairly easy for them to justify bowing down to the idol.
    - Not committing in their hearts, just doing it as a show to keep out of danger and avoid the consequence of disobeying the king.
    - They knew this would go against the Lord’s commandment. **Lev 26:1**
  - Destructive: To give into this dilemma would have also been destructive to their relationship with the Lord.
  - Destructive to people of Daniel’s day: The testimony they would be able to deliver once back home and out of captivity.
    - What kind of testimony would that have been for those that were standing firm for the Lord and resisting all of this secular culture, there were no doubt others in the faithful remnant?
    - Once they returned this account must have helped to sustain them in those years of continued difficulty.
  - Destructive to future generations:
    - What kind of testimony would that have left for us as we are faced with our own fiery trial?
    - More martyrs for Christ during the 20<sup>th</sup> century than during all the preceding centuries.
    - **Rev 2:10 “Be faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life.”**
    - These stories from Daniel are a source of great encouragement as we are reminded that God cares for His people and honors them when they are true to Him. **1 Sam 2:30 “Them that honour me I will honour.”**
- ✓ SHADRACH, MESHACH, AND ABEDNEGO HAD TRUE FAITH, AND WHEN FACED WITH A DILEMMA THAT WOULD HAVE COMPROMISED IT THEY LEANED ON HIM, HIS TRUTHS, AND I IMAGINE THE EXAMPLES OF THE MEN THAT CAME BEFORE THEM THAT EXERCISED EXTREME TRUE FAITH IN THE FACE OF OPPOSITION. E.G. JOSEPH, MOSES, ABRAHAM.
- ✓ WHEN FACED WITH A DILEMMA LET US COMMIT TO TRUE FAITH LIKE THEIRS, UNMOVED BY THREATS UNIMPRESSED BY THE CROWDS, BUT OBEYING THE LORD AND TRUSTING HIM TO WORK OUT THE CONSEQUENCES. TRUE FAITH IS THE OPPOSITE OF SELFISH FAITH THAT ATTEMPTS TO MAKE A DEAL OR EXPECTS TO BE REWARDED AND IS NOT FAITH AT ALL.

***(Q3) What temptations do you imagine Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego faced when they were brought before the king (vv. 13-15)?***

***(Q7) What are some idols you bow down to? Why? Practical steps you can take to withstand the influence?***

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Determined: They had made a decision to obey God in advance of a crisis

- These men were certainly not looking for this confrontation.
- Remember at the end of chapter 2 the declaration king Nebuchadnezzar makes to Daniel about his God?
- Maybe the three men felt free to worship their God regardless of the king's command.
- At the same time, maybe they hoped no one would notice their noncompliance.
- Certainly we could imagine there was some ill will toward them from other Babylonians and God forsaking Hebrews within the empire for their position within the kingdom.
- Regardless, God's Word is clear and true and their decision was firmly planted and would not be shifted.
  - ✓ THE LORD WILL PROBABLY NOT GIVE US THE COURAGE TO TAKE A STAND UNTIL WE ARE FACED WITH THE CRISIS.
  - ✓ HOWEVER, LIKE THE THREE MEN, WE CAN DETERMINE AND MAKE THE DECISION TO BE OBEDIENT TO GOD AND HIS WORD NOT MATTER WHAT TRIAL, CRISIS, OR DILEMMA WE ARE FACING.

***(Q4) What are some of the greater challenges believers face today in standing up for what they believe in?***

Display: They displayed confidence in the Lord. (v. 16)

- They did not hesitate to give an answer and were unwilling to argue. (v. 16)
- This was another chance offered to them to recant their decision, another opportunity to bow.
- Nebuchadnezzar knowingly was extending this opportunity to them, they should have been thrown directly into the furnace. No doubt he was further enraged by their commitment to disobedience to him.
  - ✓ AGAIN, THEY HAD DETERMINED IN ADVANCE AND HAD THE UTMOST TRUST IN THE LORD. THE WORLD USUALLY FINDS A WAY FOR US TO GET OUT OF A DILEMMA OVER OUR OBEDIENCE TO GOD.
  - ✓ ONE TINY COMPROMISE, ONE LITTLE ADMISSION, ONE UNSTATED CLAIM WHEN WE SHOULD HAVE SAID SOMETHING.
  - ✓ BUT IN THAT ONE TINY STEP WE MAKE A MOVE FARTHER FROM HIM AND DENY OUR TRUST IN THE LORD.
  - ✓ LET'S STRIVE TO DISPLAY A CONFIDENT TRUST IN THE LORD NO MATTER THE CONSEQUENCE. NO MATTER HOW BAD THE WORLD BECOMES HE HAS WON!

***(GD3) What are some modern "idols" men and women bow before?***

Declaration: They trust the Lord and declare their acceptance of His plan regardless of the outcome (v. 18)

- They had amazing courage! Of course we know the outcome of the story but they did not.
- Deliverance doesn't always come, sometimes Christians die in the furnace.
- True faith says regardless of the possibilities or outcome I will trust Him.
  - ✓ WHEN WE ARE FACED WITH A CRISIS, A DILEMMA, SICKNESS, ILLNESS, LOSS OF INCOME, OR AN OUTCOME WE DIDN'T EXPECT DO WE CONTINUE TO TRUST HIM?
  - ✓ SADLY WHEN THINGS DON'T GO THE WAY PEOPLE WANT THEM TO GO, THEY TEND TO LOSE FAITH.

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- ✓ WE MUST CONTINUE IN A TRUE FAITH THAT SAYS GOD HAS A PLAN AND HE ULTIMATELY WINS.

***(Q8) What commitments can you make to the Lord today that will prepare you to face the pressures of the secular culture around you?***

Deliverance: Like the dilemma that opened a door to be faithful, this true faith was marked with deliverance.

- As discussed previously, deliverance in the way of protected or kept from harm doesn't always happen, sometimes we die for our belief and trust in God.
- We as followers of Christ cannot know if He will rescue us out of a trial, but we can have unshakeable confidence that He will never leave us.
- Whether we are delivered or die, in both cases we experience the presence of the Lord!!!!
- Whether we are delivered from our fiery trial either present or future:
  - We are freed from our chains, our prison bonds are broken. The three young men were unscathed, they didn't even smell of smoke. The only thing that burned was that which bound them.
    - ✓ WHETHER OR NOT WE ARE SAVED FROM THE FIERY FURNACE, WE ARE LOOSED FROM THE BONDS OF THIS LIFE BY OUR OBEDIENCE AND TRUE FAITH IN THE LORD.
  - It brings the presence of Jesus. Remember king Nebuchadnezzar didn't see three in the flames but four. Jesus walked through the fire with them and He walks through the fire with us.
    - ✓ WHETHER OR NOT WE ARE SAVED FROM THE FIERY FURNACE, WE WILL EXPERIENCE THE PRESENCE OF JESUS, WE ARE NOT ALONE, THE SON OF GOD WALKS THROUGH THE FIRE WITH US.
  - It brings God praise and confounds the enemy. When the King called them, they came because they were living miracles and wanted everybody to know what their God could do. By one act of faith the three became witnesses of God to the entire Babylonian Empire.
    - ✓ WHETHER OR NOT WE ARE SAVED FROM THE FIERY FURNACE, WE BRING GLORY AND PRAISE TO GOD. GOD WILL ULTIMATELY DEFEAT OUR ENEMIES AND ESTABLISH HIS KINGDOM.
- While we may not experience deliverance in the form of safety or protection from our own fiery trial we will experience it by a liberty in Christ being loosed from the chains of this world, a presence with Jesus, and an eventual establishment of God's Kingdom here on earth.

***(GD 5) When have you sensed the Lord's presence or protection in a difficult time? Describe the experience for the group.***

#### **THREE POINTS THAT MARK TRUE FAITH:**

- **DETERMINED TO BE OBEDIENT LUKE 21:14, JOSHUA 24:15, 1 PET 3:15**
- **DISPLAYED CONFIDENT TRUST IN GOD PHI 4:13, HEB 4:16, DEU 31:6**
- **DECLARED ACCEPTANCE OF GOD'S PLAN PS 48:14, PRO 3:5-6, ROM 8:28**
- **DELIVERANCE (A BY PRODUCT OF TRUE FAITH) IS 43:2, IS 58:11, ROM 12:2**



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#### GROUP DISCUSSION

*Reflect, write, and answer as you feel comfortable*

1. What excuses or rationalizations might Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego have used to justify bowing down to Nebuchadnezzar's image?
2. What kinds of concerns distract us from being concerned with what God wants from us?
3. What are some modern "idols" men and women bow before?
4. As we get closer to the end of the world, what kinds of compromises do you think we will face as a people of faith? How would you describe the kind of faith that gives you strength to not conform?
5. When have you sensed the Lord's presence or protection in a difficult time? Describe the experience for the group.