

Faith In The Fiery Furnace

Daniel 3

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It was William Penn that said these words, "Right is right, even if everyone is against it, and wrong is wrong, even if everyone is for it." You know, long before William Penn made the statement, there were three Hebrews that lived it out—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

In Daniel 2, King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream. In his dream he saw this large statue. This large statue was really God telling the king what the kingdoms of man were going to be—the Gentile world-ruling empires—all the way up to the time of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. This statue had a head made out of gold, breast and arms of silver, a belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron, and feet and toes of iron and clay. When Daniel gave the interpretation of that dream, he made it clear that thou, O king, art the head of gold.

Babylon was represented in this statue as being the head of gold. The breast and arms of silver were the Medo-Persian Empire. The belly of brass was the Grecian Empire. The legs of iron were the Roman Empire; and the feet and toes of iron and clay represented for us a future kingdom, a ten-nation confederacy, at which time Daniel says, "You saw, O king, a stone cut without hands. It came from the heavens and struck the image on the feet, and it crumbled. The kingdoms of man will come to an end, and that stone grew into a great big mountain and was the kingdom that lasted forever and ever." That stone, that rock, is none other than Jesus Christ.

In chapter 2 we see Jesus, the stone who is smiting and judging the kingdoms of men, bringing in His eternal kingdom. We call it the Millennium because it starts with the thousand-year reign and flows into the eternal state. It is also known as the Davidic kingdom because David was promised by God that upon his throne the Messiah would reign forever and ever and ever. Jesus was the Son of David, and He is the King who will sit upon His throne and will literally come back and establish His kingdom. I'm looking forward to that, aren't you? To that day where there will be peace on earth, men will beat their swords into plow shears and their spears into pruning hooks, and nation will not make war against nation anymore. He's coming as the Prince of Peace, but Jesus Christ came and destroyed the kingdoms of men.

Here's the tie-in between chapters 2 and 3 (trust me, I'm going to get to this text); that is, Nebuchadnezzar now is going to build his own image, but it's not going to be just with a head of gold it's going to be solid gold. It's going to be about 60 cubits, the Bible says, or about 90 feet tall and about 6 cubits wide (which is about 9 feet wide). This was a huge image made out of gold. Most likely, it was made out of some stronger metal and overlaid with gold, but the entire statue was gold. This is basically Nebuchadnezzar saying, "I'm going to go on forever! I'm not going to come to an end. My kingdom will never end, and I defy the God of heaven to prove me wrong." This image was actually erected by the king (chapter 3) in defiance to God. Instead of the head of gold, he is an entire image of gold.

These three men (we are going to read about tonight that have faith in the fiery furnace), Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, are mentioned in Hebrews 11 by the reference, "...through faith...quenched the violence of fire." They are included in the hall of faith in Hebrews 11. That's really the primary message and lesson we get with these three, that they had enough faith to obey God no matter what the consequences might be. That's what God wants us to have. He wants us to have enough faith to obey Him no matter how the world responds or what the consequences might be.

There are four sections to the story. I want you to notice them as we look at it together. The first is the description of the image (verse 1). Look at it with me. "Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold," there it is, "whose height was..." I'm reading from my King James translation, "... threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon." It is believed that there is about a 20-year gap between what occurred in chapter 2 and what occurs in chapter 3. Let me just say this (as it pops in my brain real quick, because I might forget it in a few minutes), what we're reading is history. There are liberals today that would try to explain away this story as not being miraculous or a supernatural deliverance or intervention by God. I don't hold that view. I believe that there is a God in heaven, God can sustain us even in a fiery furnace, and God can preserve and keep us. Amen? I believe that this is an historical narrative and should be taken at face value—we don't have to try to explain away the miraculous.

About 20 years later, (some say 10, some say 15, maximum 20 years) after Nebuchadnezzar's dream of chapter 2, he says, "Forget God. I'm going to erect an image of myself, and I'm going to command everyone to worship this image which I have set up." This image of gold's height was 60 cubits. What is a cubit? We do not know for sure, so we can't say for sure how large the image was. A good guess and theory is that they measured it from the elbow to the longest middle finger, so it depended upon how long or how big your arm was. A cubit was from your elbow to the end of your finger, which turns out to be a little over 18 inches. It's a little more than a foot. Sixty cubits is about 90 feet (most Old Testament scholars feel that it was around 90 feet), which is quite large. The width (for the height is a little narrow, I think) was 6 cubits, which was about 9 feet wide. The plain of Dura set about 30 miles south of the city of Babylon. It's not right in Babylon but outside, so it's a suburb of the area of Babylon. In his pride and defiance against God, the king erects this image of himself.

The second movement we have is in verses 2-7. We see the demands that the king made at the dedication. He's going to dedicate this image and demand that everyone come bow down and worship it. "Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs," you read different translations, they use different terms to describe these bigwigs that are gathered together. These are all the Babylonian officials and hierarchy that are gathered together, "and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. 3 Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they

stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. 4 Then an herald..." his name isn't Herald, he was a herald, he proclaimed, "...cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages," not only were the politicians, the leading authorities, and all the bigwigs there, but all the people were gathered together as well, "To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, 5 That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: 6 And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace." The edict was bow or burn. Notice verse 7. "Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up."

What a picture this is! You've seen the pictures of the Muslims all on their faces praying toward the temple in Mecca—this sea of people all bowing down. That's the image I get in my mind—this sea of people all bowing down before this image. This image is set up and everyone is gathered together. The herald announces that there is going to be a concert, and when you hear the music starting to play (all these instruments started this music—It's interesting how music plays on our emotions. Music was involved in worship even with these pagan gods.) that's your cue, o people, to fall down and worship this golden image that has been erected or set up. How sad and how easily man is deceived in idolatry. He is spiritually deceived and worshipping the gods of his own hands.

The Word tells us that we should not worship anyone or anything but God Himself. In the Ten Commandments, we have commandment number 1, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." It could be that number 2 is actually "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image," or idols, "or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth." We live in a very idolatrous culture today, and if it's not a god that they carve out, they worship themselves, money, position and power, sexual gratification, things and materialism. We, as Christians, find ourselves in the midst of an idolatrous, pagan culture that is trying to press us into its mold to worship money, pleasure, power, and things. These things become our god. Everyone has a god and many times it's themselves, or they worship their own intellect or education, pleasure, fun, whatever it might be. We all have a god that we worship, and whatever we worship we end up serving. So, they are to bow down or they would be thrown into the fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar was serious, and he said, "If you don't bow down and worship this image which I have erected, then you will burn."

Thirdly, I want you to notice the defiance of the faithful three. Put yourself in their place. Everybody's doing it—have you ever heard that? It's legal—have you ever heard that? Everybody's doing it. It's what's happening now. It's en vogue. It's the culture. It's acceptable. It's not something that we don't do anymore. Did you know the word "permissible" actually conveys the idea of something we used to not allow but now we allow? In our culture today, we are very promiscuous. We are allowing things to go on that years ago you would never allow. You know, you watch tv and you're in shock. You're thinking, "I never imagined in my wildest

dreams that I would see this on television.” It’s amazing. That’s how widespread sin and debauchery and how promiscuous our culture has become—things we allow and accept as legitimate and okay that years ago were not permitted.

If we take a stand, as we are going to see these three Hebrews do, we are going to encounter opposition. I want you to notice (beginning in verse 8) their defiance. We’ll take it in small sections. It says, “Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews.” Now, these Chaldeans were the astrologers, the soothsayers, and the magicians. Interestingly, they are going to accuse Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego because they refused to bow to the image the king had set up. It’s interesting because this image and its idolatrous worship posed no problem for anybody but the Jews. They’re already pagans. They’re already worshipping multiple gods. They already had idols. It’s no big deal that the king asked them to worship one new idol. It’s just another god in their plethora of gods that they worshipped, but it was a big deal for the Jews. The reason it was a big deal for the Jews is because God had given them His Word.

You know, the same thing is true of us—it is a big deal! It is an issue. We’re not going to bow down, we’re not going to worship these gods, and we’re not going to follow the gods of the heathen or the gods of the culture around us because God has given to us His Word. Amen? God’s Word is our guide, our light, and our lamp. I don’t care what the culture is saying. I don’t care what the culture is doing. I don’t care what is permissible in society today. I have God’s Word, and God’s Word doesn’t change. Amen? When God says it’s wrong, it’s wrong no matter what everyone else says it’s right, and what God says is right we must obey. We must obey.

We find here that the Chaldeans come and accuse these Jews, which is interesting, Daniel had just saved their necks by interpreting the dream but because they were now exalted over these Chaldeans they were jealous. You know, promotion sometimes can get you in trouble. Sometimes God’s blessings can get you in trouble when other people become envious or jealous. It’s a heinous sin to be jealous of other people. When we are jealous thinking, “I deserve that place. I deserve that position. I deserve that job. I deserve that spouse rather than the one I have.” We become jealous of other people. I believe they were moved with jealousy, and “They spake and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever.” That’s the kind of phrase you use whenever you want to address the king, “O king, live for ever. Thou, O king, has made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, shall fall down and worship the golden image: 11 And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, that he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. 12 There are certain Jews whom thou has set over the affairs of the province of Babylon,” I believe that they were jealous, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou has set up. Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king. 14 Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? 15 Now if ye be

ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" The king was about to find out—he was going to find out who that God was.

Notice verse 16, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter." In other words, "We don't have to discuss this. There's no need for a second chance." And they said in verse 17, "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king." He's able to deliver us, and He will deliver us out of your hand either way. Then notice verse 18, "But if not," you've got to underline that. Highlight it, circle it, those first three words of verse 18, "be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." In verse 12, they took a stand. They said to the king, "...these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou has set up." First, they claimed that they disregarded the king—not so. They were there. They were present as the king commanded them to come, but it is true (verse 12) that they would not serve the god of Nebuchadnezzar nor worship the golden image which he had set up. They took a stand, and so should we.

The world is always trying to press us into its mold. We need to take a stand. In 1 John 2:15 it says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." We should not love the world or let the world (Romans 12:2) press us into its mold. When we do take a stand, I want you to notice what happens—the world responds in anger (it says there in verse 13 that the king was in a rage) and then they respond in amazement (verse 14). "Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?" Then you have the king's antagonism in verse 15. First he was angry, amazed, and then he was antagonistic.

It's interesting that the king gave the three a second chance. You would think the king would've said, "Off with your heads," or "You're going to be thrown into the fiery furnace." The king liked to chop people up into little pieces and then destroy their houses. Now, he has another method that he's introduced—the fiery furnace would be heated up and people would be thrown into it.

Of all those that bowed (the entire nation), standing out in the middle of the sea of people I visualize three young Hebrews. They're still very young men, and they're standing straight. They're standing tall. You talk about sticking out in a crowd! Can you imagine standing up and looking out over thousands of people, literally thousands of people around you, all bowing down on their faces? You're kind of standing there, "Do do do...Whoa, Dude! I got a feeling that we're going to get in trouble here. We're like really standing out." You know, if you take a stand for Jesus you're going to be different than the crowd. You're going to stand out on the job. You're going to stand out at work. You're going to stand out in your neighborhood. You may

even stand out in your own family if you're a believer, but you stand for the Lord.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego could have come up with many excuses for bowing down just like we sometimes create excuses for bowing down to the ways of the world. They could've said, "God knows our hearts. We'll just bow down on the outside, but He knows we love Him on the inside. We may be going through the motions, but God knows our hearts." That wasn't going to happen. Secondly, they could've argued and said, "God will forgive us." That's another cop-out that people do. "Well, everybody's doing it, so I'm just going to do it. You know, I'll play now and pray later. God will forgive me. There's always 1 John 1:9, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'" They could have also said, "Everybody's doing it. Wow! When in Babylon, do as the Babylonians do—worship the golden image. If we don't, we're all going to die." They could've said, "You know what? If we die, we're no good to God. If we die, we can't help the other Jews." It's interesting that no other Jews are mentioned here. Could it be that the other Jews were bowing down?

It's interesting too (and if I don't forget and I remember, I'll come back to it), where's Daniel? One thing we do know, Daniel isn't bowing and Daniel isn't going to worship this golden image. Daniel is either off on an official trip somewhere or was excused by the king because he'd been exalted to an important place and was over everybody else. It's interesting that there is the absence of Daniel in this story. It's just the three—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—but they could've said, "Look it, we'll just bow. God will forgive us and then we can be in this position of importance. We can help other Jews and be a testimony for God." Or, they could have said, "Let's just do it. This is too hard. God's asking us to do too much. I don't have the strength or the power to do it."

I believe that whatever God commands us to do, God will give us the strength and the ability to do it—it's that simple. If God tells you to love your wife as Christ loved the church, husbands, guess what? You can do that. If God tells you as a wife to submit to your husband...I know it sounds impossible, but guess what? You can do that. If God says, "...this is His will even your sanctification that you abstain from sexual immorality," guess what, people of God? It can be done! Amen? God can give you the strength and the ability. "Oh, but the temptation is so great! Oh, but everybody's doing it! Oh, but it's so acceptable. Oh, it's just so en vogue today. Oh, God will forgive me. God knows my heart, I really love Him. I'm not strong enough to do this." God gives us the strength to do what He commands us to do. I believe that! Whatever God has told us in His Word is His will for our lives, we need to just yield our bodies and trust Him as we're going to see these three Hebrews did.

How they answered the king is amazing to me (verse 16). They answered the king with conviction. "We don't need to talk about this—no discussion here, no need to debate it. We don't need to talk about the situation." The matter had already been settled. Why? Because they knew the Word of God. Write that on the inside of your eyelids. They knew the Bible. Once you know the Bible, guess what you have to do? Obey it. You say, "Yeah, that's why I don't want to come to church anymore. I don't want to hear the Bible anymore." Did you know knowledge brings responsibility? The more you know, the more you're responsible for. Light

brings responsibility. Knowledge brings responsibility. If you're coming to Bible study on Wednesday night, Sunday mornings, during the week—you're responsible. You're responsible to be obedient to what God has called you to do. They answered with conviction, and they had convictions that provided them courage.

Several centuries ago there was a theologian named Athanasius. He was being persecuted by the Roman government. The Roman emperor said to Athanasius, this Christian, "Athanasius, don't you understand that the whole world is against you?" Athanasius looked back at the emperor and said, "Then, Athanasius is against the whole world." I love that! No matter if any go with us or any follow or any agree (maybe even your family are going a certain direction) you will obey God. You will follow God. You will be faithful to God. We sing, "If none go with me, I will still follow." Amen? That's what these three had to do. Their conviction was that obedience to God comes before personal safety. I think that you should remember that—obedience to God comes before personal safety. "Well, it could be dangerous," or "You could get hurt." "They may beat you up." God's called us, God's plan, God's will we have to obey. Right? Whatever God calls us to do we must obey. You say, "Well, we could really run into difficulty." So what. Would you rather disobey God? Would you rather dishonor God? Would you rather be out of the will of God? It's better to obey than it is to disobey God and try to take an easy path. Their conviction was that obedience comes before personal safety. We need to remember that.

In verse 17, they answered with confidence. "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able..." I love the Bible passages that affirm the ability of God. Mark that. Did you know that all things are possible with God? Did you know that God is able? I'm not able. We're not able, but God is able! Whatever your circumstances, whatever your situation, and you're looking at it thinking, "I don't have the money. I don't have the ability or the talent," or "I don't know what to do?" God is in control. God is able. "I can't fix my kids. They're all messed up." He is able. "I can't fix my marriage." He is able. "I can't heal my body." He is able! Amen? The Bible says, "...he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." Some have changed that to, "He is able to save to the guttermost all who come to God by Him." Not only is He able to save, but guess what He's able to do? He's "...able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." Did you know that God saved you, God will keep you, and God will preserve you? God is able!

Here's what you need to do tonight—you need to focus on and hang onto the ability of God. Don't think in terms of your resources or your ability, but focus on God and His ability. God is able! They answered with confidence. They knew that God was able. Then, they answered (verse 18) with commitment, and this is my favorite. They said, "...our God whom we serve is able to deliver us..." then they say in verse 18, "But if not," you say, "Wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute! What's this 'if not' bit? I don't like this 'if not.'" Do you know there are some people, based on their positive confession faith emphasis theology, that think this is a wrong statement to make? This would be labeled as a "negative" confession—never say anything negative. You should only say things that are positive. Here these three say, "Our God is able." It's not a question of the ability of God. Your healing is not a question of God's ability, but it may be a question of God's will, and if it's God's will not to heal you, guess

what? God will give you grace. His grace will be sufficient and His strength will be made perfect in your weakness. If it's God's will not to make you a millionaire, then God will provide for you, God will take care of you. Maybe you're single (you're not married) and you see somebody you think is pretty cool and you'd like to marry. You Jericho march around their house, you claimed them in the name of Jesus, and "Thus saith the Lord, I will marry you," kind of a thing. It doesn't happen and you get all bummed out. You need to say, "God, You're able, but if it's not Your will..." never be afraid to accept the will of God.

You have a loved one that's sick. You're praying God heals them and they die and go to heaven. Are you willing to accept God's will? That God knows what He's doing and God's ways are best? Actually, it takes more faith to rest in God's will than it does to try to impose your will upon God. "This is going to happen. I believe it. I confess it. That settles it," rather than saying, "God, I know You're able, but whatever You do I will accept. I know You love me. Your ways for me are best, and I'm willing to accept Your will in my life knowing You love me and that Your plan is perfect." "But if not..." that is more faith than trying to positively confess and claim that God is going to deliver you. They knew that God would actually deliver them out of the hand of the king even if they had to go into the fiery furnace. What an awesome thing that is!

Is it ever okay to disobey the powers that be? The answer is yes—if the edicts and the commandments of men command us to do something that is disobedience to God. We must obey God rather than man. We must do what God has commanded us to do. It's more important to obey God than it is to obey man and disobey God. They said, "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us... be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Notice they answered with conviction based on Scripture, confidence God was able, and commitment, "But if not." So, conviction based on Scripture, confidence in God's ability to deliver, and a commitment that God's will was best.

In closing, I want you to notice (verses 19-30) the deliverance of these faithful three. "Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury," that's King Jimmy for really mad. He was hotter than his furnace. "...and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated." Now, I realize a lot of people like to read typology into this furnace and the three Hebrews. I'm going to come back to that in just a moment. Does the furnace represent the tribulation of seven years? Does the image of Nebuchadnezzar represent the Abomination of Desolation? Do the three Hebrews represent the 144,000 safely through the tribulation? Does Daniel, not mentioned in the chapter, mention the church—he's not in view he's been raptured, he's with the Lord? People like to read that into the story. One of the problems is there is nothing to back it up in the New Testament or other places, so we need to be careful that we don't read into the Bible something that God never intended there to be even though the picture seems to be painted thus.

I want you to notice that the furnace is heated up seven times hotter than normal. "And he

commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. 21 Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.” They weren’t delivered from, they’re going to be delivered in and through the fiery furnace. “Therefore because the king’s commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.” These flames were so hot that the strong men that threw them in actually were consumed. An interesting point because some critics of the miracle say that in furnaces in those days there sometimes would be cold spots, and the three found a cold spot in the furnace and kind of hid there. A couple of problems with that—the ropes were burnt. They burnt. If the ropes around their wrists and ankles were going to burn and break then you would think they would be affected by the fire; and if the guys that threw them in, standing at a distance, were consumed by the fire, how much more Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that fell bound into the fiery furnace yet God is going to preserve them.

“Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors,” he must’ve had his own little “king window” looking into the furnace, you know, fireproof glass, double paned, you could see into the furnace. He’s going to watch these guys melt before his very eyes. “...and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.” Yes, that’s right. “He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” Isn’t that amazing? The king goes, “Uh, excuse me, guys. How many did we throw into the furnace tonight? Didn’t we throw three guys in there?” “Yeah, king, we threw three.” He says, “Well, I see four, and the fourth looks like the Son of God.”

I believe that Jesus showed up. I believe that fourth visitor in the furnace was none other than Jesus Christ. This is what’s called a Christophany—an appearance of Christ in the Old Testament. Christ shows up, and they’re walking around. They’re probably singing a song. If I were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and I got thrown into the fiery furnace bound with ropes...POP! The minute those things pop, “Whooooo!” I’d be outta there! You see in the cartoons with the puff of smoke going, you know. I’d probably run through the side of the furnace (explosive noise). There’d be a hole like a little silhouette of my body (explosive noise) and the smoke, “Whooo hooo hooo!” There goes John Miller with smoke coming off of him. But these three had to be said, “Come out!” If you’re walking around in the furnace, you need somebody to tell you to come out?! “Hey! Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, come out. I need to talk to you guys.” They had such an amazing encounter with the Lord! This is a whole sermon in and of itself. “In times of affliction we commonly meet,” said John Bunyan, “with the sweetest experiences of the love of God.”

Do you want to experience God? Then stand on His Word in obedience and no matter what comes your way, God will meet you, strengthen, and sustain you. No matter what trial, adversity, trouble, or difficulty you go through, God will meet you in that furnace. When through fiery pathways you go through a fire, God will meet you, be with you, and sustain you. The

flames will not hurt you. The water will not overflow you. God will be with you. So, first they experienced His presence. Jesus Christ was with them in the furnace.

“Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire. 27 And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king’s counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.” It didn’t touch them! They didn’t even smell like smoke. “Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego,” this guy gets spiritual real quick, “who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him,” I’m going to come back to verse 28, “and have changed the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. 29 Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill,” so he gave up on the furnace and went back to his old methods. He figured, “It’s not going to work, so I’ll go back.” “...because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.” Isn’t that great? He recognized that the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the God of the Hebrews, was the true and living God. “Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon.”

I want you to note these:

- 1.They experienced God’s presence (verse 25).
- 2.They experienced God’s power (verse 27). They saw that these men whose bodies the fire had no power.
- 3.They experienced God’s preservation (verse 27). God preserved and took care of them.
- 4.They experienced God’s promotion. The king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

There is so much that we can draw from this story, but let me go back to verse 28 and point this out. Why did they experience God’s presence, God’s preservation, and God’s promotion? Here’s why. They trusted in God and yielded their bodies (verse 28). Two things—they trusted in God, and they yielded their bodies. My suggestion is we do the same. Amen? That we trust in God...Will you trust in God and yield your bodies?

I’ve told you my story about getting kidnapped at gunpoint. At the end of that little episode, they actually got us out of the car. They cocked their guns (sound of guns being cocked) and lined us up. We were at a park in Inglewood. There was a dumpster right there, we figured they were going to throw us in the dumpster. They lined us up facing this big tall chain-linked fence, (sound of guns being cocked) cocked their guns, and we stood there waiting to be shot. I felt

like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. I remember turning to the other pastors that were with me and said, "You know what? We belong to God. We belong to God. We're the Lord's servants. We're doing His will," and I said, "let's just commit our lives to God right now." We all three raised our hands. We actually raised our hands and said, "Lord, we belong to You. This is Your problem. We know that You're able to deliver us, but if not, Lord, we trust You. We're in Your hands. Lord, just have Your way." As we stood there, one of the pastors looked at me and said, "There's only two of them, three of us, so they can't shoot us all three at the same time." I mean, what makes your brain think of something like that, you start counting how many shots, and he actually said to me, "If you hear some shots ring out and you're not hit, run!" I'm like, "Dude, at a moment like this, right now I'm just going to say, 'Lord, help. Lord, have Your way.'" As we stood there, the next thing we heard was the car start—our car that they kidnapped. We heard the car start, and it drove off. We're like, "Wuh, we're still here!" We looked around and could see the taillights disappearing in the dark. We were like, "Whoa!" The adrenaline was pumping. We grabbed our bags, ran out in the street trying to find some help, but just standing there saying, "Lord, we're in Your hands. We are Your servants. We belong to You."

It may be that you go through the furnace, but God will meet you in the furnace and deliver you through the furnace through the fire. But if not—listen to me very carefully—more important to obey God and die than disobey God and stay alive. When I read this story I ask myself, "If it became illegal to be a Christian tomorrow and it was declared that if you are a Christian or pray or love Jesus that you'll be put to death, would I (my faith) stand the test?" Would I be able to say, "Lord, I'm going to stand for You? Lord, I trust You. Lord, I commit my life to You?" Better to die in the will of God than to live out of the will of God. Better to be obedient to God and suffer death than to be out of God's will and dishonor God. Let's pray.