

Daniel 3:1-30

“Won’t Bow, Won’t Bend, Won’t Burn”

Daniel Ch 3 inspires us to stand firm in our faith. It’s yet another reminder of the fact that God will never leave us nor forsake us but that He is always *with* us. We see before us in the practical that which the scripture teaches in principle, “*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the Lord your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior;*”¹

Listen, Satan wants to *destroy* your faith. God wants to *develop* your faith. As to where Satan will tempt you, God will test you that your faith might be refined. & So often the way God refines our faith is by the “fiery trials” of life. Even as gold is brought under “the heat” so that the impurities might be revealed & removed, so to God will bring our faith under “fire” that it might be purified & He might be glorified in our lives.

One has said, “A faith that can’t be tested is a faith that can’t be trusted.” False faith will wither in times of trial, but true faith will take deeper root, grow stronger & bring forth greater fruit for the glory of God.

Daniel Ch 3 forces us to think through our faith; can it be tested, can it be trusted? Is your faith (my faith) bringing forth fruit for God’s glory? ... Let’s look to Vs 1.

Vs 1

Why does this ring a bell in our minds? Oh yeah, because we just read in Daniel Ch 2 about a dream that Nebuchadnezzar had which involved an enormous/awe inspiring image! However, in his dream the image was made up of various types of materials. Only the head was of gold, the chest & arms were silver, the belly & thighs were bronze, the legs were of iron & the feet were of iron mixed w/clay...

Now, we don’t know how much time has transpired between Ch’s 2-3. Was it 5 months, 5 yrs, 15yrs? We don’t know. The Septuagint points to a # of yrs later, but there’s some debate that revolves around that. Either way Daniel is making an obvious connection for us regarding what Nebuchadnezzar *dreams* in Ch 2 & what Nebuchadnezzar *does* in Ch 3.

But there’s 1 considerable difference isn’t there? As to where the image in Ch 2 is comprised of various materials, the image he has constructed in Ch 3 is made of only 1.

¹ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Is 43:2-3]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

At this point we should probably remind ourselves that in the interpretation of the dream we learned that Nebuchadnezzar was represented by the head of gold. His kingdom dominated the then known world & he ruled over it all... However, Daniel made it clear that his empire would not last. In fact, none of the empires of man would last. Only the final empire would endure forever & that would be the kingdom that God established upon the earth through the rule & reign of J.C.

So, a couple of things seem clear at this point. #1 However much time has passed, the dream is still on his mind, he thinks about it (& who wouldn't). #2 Daniel told him that his kingdom would come to an end; he defies that. In his dream the image only had a head of gold, here he has a giant image crafted that's made *entirely* of gold.

He's doing his best to ensure that what Daniel's God has told him doesn't come to pass. That *his* kingdom goes on & on, that the day of his reign & authority would never end... This image will be a symbol of submission & loyalty to him alone. It's almost like an insurance plan, a strategy against Daniel's prophecy & an emblem of his pride. He's defying God's word.

Now; the image really wasn't like a normal statue. More like an obelisk that you might see in ancient Egypt (or a totem pole of sorts). It was about 90' tall & 9' wide. Being so large, it's safe to say that it wasn't an image of *solid* gold but probably wood overlaid with gold. But he didn't want his kingdom to be merely the head, he wanted the whole body...

Vs 2-3

The idea here is that he's gathering every governing official in all of his empire into this plain where the image is set up. He called the chief representatives of the king, the top military commanders, the civil administrators, counselors to those in government, treasurers, judges (administrators of the law), any & every top official in every branch over his known empire. There would've been thousands of people there & collectively they would represent every tribe, tongue & nation that he ruled over & they were commanded to be present at the dedication ceremony of this image (we don't know if it was an image of himself, but that seems likely).

Vs 4-6

We've noted Nebuchadnezzar's pride, here we're noting his *promise*. If you don't bow down & worship this image when the "worship team" begins to play...

You will be cast *immediately* (Vs 6) into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. ... Sounds reasonable enough... ☺ But you get the idea don't you? The worship of this image was meant to be a test of allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar. When you hear them *play* you had to *obey*. He was demanding a public display of recognition & absolute submission to his total authority throughout his kingdom.

& Since worship was involved here, there was both political and religious significance on the table. He's in essence purposing a 1 world government & a 1 world religion (of which he is at the center). & Seeing as how the herald addresses them as peoples, nations & languages we gather that they served as representatives of those over whom they ruled. The point being that the official's act of obedience signified not only their submission, but the submission of all whom they represented.

Now if you chose *not* to submit that was totally your choice. However, the repercussion was the death penalty (immediately). (Due process was not in view here). He treated failure to comply as an act of treason. So basically, what's in view is obligatory homage to Nebuchadnezzar & all he stood for (politically, spiritually, so on & so forth).

But let's just get this out there, you cannot *force* people to worship. *True worship is an expression of the heart. That's one of the dynamics that makes true worship such a powerful & personal element in your life. God doesn't want you to go through the motions if your heart isn't in it. God wants you to love Him, to respond to Him & devote your life to Him, give your worship to Him out of the overflow of your heart.*

Nebuchadnezzar couldn't have cared less about your heart, all he was after was unquestioned obedience.

Now you prophecy buffs should know that we also have a foreshadowing here. Nebuchadnezzar is here serving as a type of A.C. whom the bible declares will rule the last world empire of man. He will serve as a political figure initially, but will demand (ultimately) to be worshipped as God & will set up an image of himself & cause as many as will not worship it to be put to death. Rev 13:14-15, *"And he deceives those who dwell on the earth—by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast (A.C.) who was wounded by the sword and lived. He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed."*²

Vs 7

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Re 13:14–15]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

There was total and immediate obedience to Nebuchadnezzar's command. & This is Satan's strategy, his philosophy. *Job 2:4 "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life"*. People will do anything to preserve their life... & Generally speaking that's true. But it's *not* true of the believer who's hope does not lie in the things of this world.

We adhere to the philosophy that Jesus shared when He said, *"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. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 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."*³ Our chief objective isn't to save our own skin... but to glorify God.

Vs 8-12

We've seen these guys esteemed twice by the king, once in Ch 1 & again in Ch 2. I mentioned to you then that, that would become a problem. Normally people whom you've subjugated are delegated to positions of servitude, not elevated to positions of authority. So there was some major resentment in Nebuchadnezzar's cabinet. & Seeing an opportunity to get rid of them, they seize it. Evidently the king personally didn't notice that they didn't bow. Being so many in attendance it'd be ez to overlook a few guys. But my suspicion is that these Chaldeans had their eyes on them in particular.

But here's what I want you to see. Did these 3 guys make a big stink about how wrong it was (what the king was doing)? Did they launch a protest, stop chariots & set in motion a national divide? No. They just did what was right. They refrained from sharing in the sin of idolatry. They didn't *hide* the fact that they weren't bowing (they were open in doing what was right), but they didn't *broadcast* their actions either. They simply obeyed God rather than man in refusing to bow to an idol.

Listen, if you're going to obey God, you don't have to draw attention to your actions (or the ungodly actions of others). Like Jesus said, a candle that's lit can't be hidden. People see light in a dark place. Having said that, neither should we try to hide who we are in Christ. We don't want to be closet Christians, or secret servants of God. We're to be who we are in Christ & let the chips fall where they may.

Vs 13-15

One thing *we can say* about Nebuchadnezzar is that he at least didn't simply go on hearsay.

³ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [In 12:24-26]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

He didn't say, "I heard you won't bow when the music is played or worship the image so it's to the furnace w/you!" He gave them a personal interview. "I've heard this... is it true? Now listen, I'm going to give you a chance to show a change of heart here. I'm gonna have my worship team start playing, & when they do, if you bow down & worship... good. But if *not...* you'll be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?"

We've seen Nebuchadnezzar's pride, we've seen his promise, here we see his *pressure*. & In a very real sense this is an even greater test for these guys. It's one thing to make a stand for God; it's another thing to maintain your position when confronted by the pressure, "Is it true?" Just ask Peter, right? He made a stand for Jesus after Jesus was arrested, he followed Him, clear up into the courtyard. But he wilted under the pressure & denied him when he was confronted w/the question, "Is it true?" "Aren't *you* a follower of Jesus?" He couldn't take the pressure.

Here they are, they're before the king, the furnace, the music, their compatriots & competitors, all eyes are on them & it's all intended to convince them to compromise. But they knew in their heart it was far more important to obey God rather than man. Nebuchadnezzar wasn't about to lose face on this occasion or be seen as weak. In his pride he was in essence telling them, "You shall have no other gods before me." But they would honor God in faith. Meaning they would obey the word of God regardless of the feelings *w/in* them, the circumstances *around* them or the consequences *before* them.

But Nebuchadnezzar was willing to give them one more chance to compromise. & Temptation is awfully generous that way. It's always willing to give you "one more chance" to sin against God.

& You should see the fact that when he said, "Who is the god who deliver you from my hands?" That was a direct defiance of any "god" who was dare come against him. He's placing himself above any other "god" setting himself *as* God.

Vs16-18

Don't you love this? They confess their "guilt", affirm their faith & resolve themselves to the sovereignty of God's will. Let's not forget they didn't know how this would end! There was no special revelation, angelic visitation saying "Don't worry. God will deliver you." None of that. They recognized that obedience to God might not work out for them in a pleasant way. But their obedience wasn't contingent upon God doing what they wanted. They would obey God, even if it meant their death!

They resolved themselves to the position that Job took, *“Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.”*⁴ Family, the key is found in 3 words of Vs 17, “God... is... able.” They knew that one way or another, either through death or miraculous deliverance God would deliver them from the king. (To live is Christ, to die is gain. That’s the kind of mindset they had). “So we aren’t going to bend here.”

For you & me, it means even when things don’t work out like we thought they would, or like we thought they should we’re still going to honor God, to praise God & to submit our lives to God knowing that He’s on the throne & He has a plan that works toward my eternal good & His eternal glory.

When they says, “We have no need to answer you in this matter.” They’re saying, “We have no need to defend ourselves or try & justify our position before you. We assume the guilt you’ve laid upon us, we won’t bow to the image. You do what you need to do.”

Family this is powerful stuff... Jeremiah wrote, *“Ah, Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You.”*⁵ He made the heavens & the earth. He holds the scope of the universe in the span of His hand... What could possibly be too hard for Him? Nothing!

So you have a couple things working for you, right? #1 You serve the God for whom nothing will be impossible. #2 He loves you... He’s for you & not against you. Does that mean things will always go the way you think they should? No. (Spoiler alert) They’re going into the fire!

Don’t subscribe to a “commercial” kind of faith. That which says, “We’ll obey God so long as He rewards us for doing so.” The “what’s in it for me” mentality. “God, if you’ll heal me I’ll ___ for You.” That’s not believing in God, that’s bargaining w/God. True faith says, “God, Your will be done. Be glorified in my life regardless of what that looks like from my perspective.” Let your request be made known to God & resolve to follow Him regardless of how it looks in this life.

Read Heb 11. Lists all kinds of men & women of faith. Some were delivered by a miracle, others were martyrs. God will always reward faith, but He won’t always step in & perform a miracle. Some God delivers from the trial, others He strengthens in the trial. Our heart is, “Be glorified in me.” Habakkuk 3, *“Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls—*

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Job 13:15]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Je 32:17]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."⁶ Their heart was, "We don't doubt God's power, but we won't presume upon God's will."

Here's something else I want you to see. Do you remember back in Ch 1 when they purposed in their heart to honor God in not eating the king's delicacies? Seemed like a relatively small thing. But God prepared them for a big test through their faithfulness in the small test. He who is faithful w/a little will be faithful w/much. Don't despise the days of small things. If you'll obey God in the small things, you'll obey Him in the big things. But if you won't obey in the little things... It won't be any different in the big things. If you fill your life w/all kinds of small compromises, you won't stand firm when there's a major test. If you're going to be stubborn, why not be stubborn about obeying God?

"I asked God to take this desire for drinking away from me. This addiction to pornography out of my life..." & Sometimes God will miraculously deliver people. But what if He doesn't deliver you like that? Just decide to disobey because you asked & God didn't do what you wanted Him to? Or trust God in the fire & be stubborn about obedience, rather than succumb to disobedience? Do the hard work. Glorify God in taking the step to provide safeguards or coming back to sobriety or whatever. Don't give up your obedience.

These guys could've made any # of excuses. "God knows our heart, we'll bow on the outside, but not on the inside." "We can serve God better if we stay alive, let's just bow." "Everyone else is doing it so... we may as well." They may've said, "We're not renouncing God, we're just honoring the king." "It'll be over in a few minutes, why throw our lives away for a few minutes?" A few minutes in compromise can change the course of your entire life! It can chart the course for your eternity.

They said, "Do what you need to king. We aren't going to bow. Our God *can* deliver us, maybe He *won't* deliver us. Either way we're honoring Him..."

Vs 19-23

Nebuchadnezzar's pride, his promise, his pressure... this is his persecution. He was full of fury. Told his men to stoke the furnace (7xs simply means hotter than it's ever been). It would've more than likely been a furnace that had an opening at the top, for putting things in & a door at the bottom for taking things out as well as an opening in the side wall or a place to force air in to heat it up. So I don't know if the fire leapt out of the top of it as the men were approaching, but he made sure it was a raging inferno & had his top military men bind these guys.

He didn't take the time to disrobe them, he just bound them & had them brought to the furnace. & As they were pushing them in, the fire consumed them that were forcing them in.

Vs 24-25

When we read that the king was "astonished" that seems like an understatement, doesn't it? The Septuagint says that he heard them singing praises... You can kind of see it right? He sees them fall into the fire & turns to walk away & all the sudden he hears singing coming from the furnace... He turns around & peers inside & doesn't see 3 men burning alive. He sees 4... loose & walking in the midst of the fire. & The 4th is like the Son of God!

You know why? Because it was! The pre-incarnate Christ in the fire w/them. It was in the fire that Jesus drew near to *them* & others were able to see *Him* in their lives. It's interesting that we don't read that *they* saw Him (maybe they did). But we don't know. We know they knew God was w/them because they weren't consumed. But sometimes we're aware of Jesus' presence in our trials, other times we're not. Either way He's there & so often that's when others see Him most obviously in our lives.

Nebuchadnezzar also observed that they were no longer bound, the only thing the fire burned was the ropes that bound them. They found freedom from that which bound them & fellowship w/God in the midst of the fire... The flames weren't quenched, but the power of them was.

Vs 26-27

So often the fiery trials become opportunities for God to show Himself strong on our behalf to others. I can't even grill a burger w/out smelling like smoke, these guys came out of the furnace for everyone to see not even singed by the fire.

Vs 28

His pride, his promise, his pressure, his persecution... here is his *praise*. "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach & Abed-Nego..."

They yielded their bodies, & refused to worship or serve any god except their own & frustrated the king's word." Write it down, read it later Rom 12:1-2.

Now we notice He's still not Nebuchadnezzar's God. But believe me God is making Himself real to him & he (like all of us) has a choice to make.

Vs 29-30

His proclamation (Vs 29), his promotion (Vs 30). Don't bow to the idols of this world, don't bend from your obedience to God's word & you won't burn in the fiery trials of life. God will deliver you, maybe through taking you home, maybe through hedging you about. Either way He will be w/you & will never forsake you. Honor Him & He will honor you...

Prayer Points:

God we thank You for Daniel Ch 3. May our faith be found flourishing before You. May we honor You w/our lives. We thank You for *Your* faithfulness, be glorified in our lives.

God wants to be glorified in your life. That begins w/being *in* your life. If you've not turned from your sin. If you've not surrendered your life to Christ, do so today. Believe on the Lord J.C. & You'll be saved.