

Godly Conduct Under Persecution

by William Burnett

The sermon emphasizes the importance of trusting God in all circumstances, even in the face of adversity and persecution, and warns against idolizing truth and the dangers of modern music.

Scripture: Psalm 23:4, Proverbs 17:3, Isaiah 43:1, Daniel 3:17, Matthew 28:20, John 16:33, Romans 8:31, 1 Corinthians 10:21, 2 Corinthians 4:17, Hebrews 13:5

Topics: "Persecution And Faith", "Trusting God"

Description

William Burnett preaches on the lessons from Daniel chapter 3, emphasizing the importance of trusting God in the midst of trials, even when facing unbearable circumstances. He warns against distorting truth, exaggerating it, and turning it into an idol, highlighting the dangers of idolizing one truth at the expense of others. Burnett also discusses the influence of religion in political systems, the power of music in idolatry, and the misconception that faith guarantees deliverance from all troubles. He concludes by stressing the presence of God in the fire of trials, reminding believers that they are never alone in their struggles.

Transcript

INTRODUCTION

In Daniel chapter 3 we learn some of the things that were going on in the lives of Daniel's friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. We will learn that the Lord does not always deliver from the trial, but that He will be with us in it, and that we must be prepared to trust him when the heat is unbearable, knowing that He will see us through. Let us examine some of the lessons of this chapter.

THERE IS NOTHING WORSE THAN TRUTH DISTORTED, EXAGGERATED, AND MADE AN IDOL IN ITSELF

In chapter 2 Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar the meaning of the dream of the Great Image, and he told him, "Thou art this head of gold." When we come into Chapter 3, we discover that Nebuchadnezzar makes a great idol of gold, 90 feet high and 9 feet wide and sets it up in the plain of Dura as an object of worship. Nebuchadnezzar was indeed that head of gold, but he had now completely distorted this truth, exaggerated it, and made it an idol to be worshipped.

We see an example of this during the Lord's time here on earth. The Pharisees had taken the Law, which was given by God, and they had exaggerated it, expanded it, distorted it, and idolized it. The truth had

become an end in itself and taken to extremes that violated the spirit of the letter, inflicting unnecessary suffering upon men. For example, the observance of the Sabbath was more important to them than the healing of a man whose hand was withered. Sadly, this same spirit can invade our assemblies. We must stand for truth and right, but it is possible to take truth to extremes and to exaggerate and distort things to the point where violence is done to other principles, and for truth to become an idol in itself. May the Lord enable us to avoid distortion, exaggeration, and idolization of one truth at the expense of another.

RELIGION IS THE GREATEST INFLUENCE FOR GOOD OR BAD IN THE WORLD'S POLITICAL SYSTEM

The Babylonian Empire had embraced peoples with a variety of cultural, political and religious backgrounds. Nebuchadnezzar had the wisdom to see that a common religion would be a great political force to bind all into one, and this was the idea behind this image he made. Of course, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego could not comply with his dictate to worship the image, and they were branded as opponents to the government, etc., and threatened with a horrifying death in a fiery furnace.

In today's world, the greatest headaches to the political leaders can be mentioned in one word--Religion!! Most of the conflicts around the globe find their roots in religious tensions. We can well imagine the political benefits in terms of world peace if all were brought under the banner of one religion. Of course, Scripture makes it very clear that this is indeed what will happen in the world system, and we already see the makings of it beginning to appear. Unfortunately, the Christian cannot comply with the dreams of the politicians, and before the Lord returns to remove us at the Rapture, we can expect to see a wave of persecution for non-compliance and bigotry being directed to those "fundamentalist" Christians. We are about to face the same situation that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego faced. How will we stand?

MUSIC IS A POWERFUL ASSIST TO IDOLATRY

The subtlety of the religious intrigue being exercised by Nebuchadnezzar reaches new heights when music was used as the lead-in to the new idolatry. Nebuchadnezzar recognized that music is a powerful tool for good or bad, and he was determined to use it for his godless purpose.

I believe that good music has been given to us by God, and can be enjoyed with great benefit. David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, recognized the value of music, and he used its powerful effects to calm the agitated, paranoid mind of Saul on a number of occasions. The little that is revealed to us about Heaven shows it to be filled with songs of praise to the Lamb in the midst of the Throne.

However, we are living in a world where music has become the powerful lead-in to idolatry. Modern day "rock" musicians, with their smoking altars and unearthly lighting effects, spit out their angry, filthy, violent, godless lyrics to the accompaniment of mind-bending, ear-splitting noise and confusion. Let me say, categorically, that I do not believe that there is such a thing as Christian Rock music, and we should strongly advise our young people to avoid it. It is a real danger to spiritual well-being. Parents should not allow children who are under their authority to listen to the world's idolatrous music. Young people, now beyond your parent's authority and striking out on your own, please do not listen to "rock" music, so-called Christian or otherwise, because it will destroy your Christian life and cause you to follow other gods. It is true what Paul taught the Corinthians, "Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils." (1 Cor. 10:21)

OUR FAITH MUST NOT REST ON THE PREMISE THAT GOD WILL DELIVER US FROM ALL TROUBLE AND TRIBULATION

Nebuchadnezzar was furious at the non-compliance of these three men of God. But, at this stage, Nebuchadnezzar made a fatal mistake when he said to them " Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" He challenged God's ability to deliver them. Notice the answer that the three men gave: " 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. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." (Daniel 3:17-18) If God wanted to deliver them, and he could, then that was good, but if he would not deliver them that was acceptable to them as well.

Many people believe that faith in Christ will introduce one to a life of plenty and prosperity, and that God will protect from any illness or misfortune in this life. This is just not true. The Lord Jesus Himself suffered more than any of us can imagine. Most of the apostles suffered death by martyrdom, and countless thousand of Christians down through the ages, from the Coliseum in Rome, to the burnings and drownings of the days of the Covenanters in Scotland, to the recent burning of a missionary and his family in India, have shed their blood for their faith in Christ. May the Lord give us a faith that does not depend upon what God is giving to us, but a faith that trusts Him implicitly even in the midst of adversity.

IF WE TRUST GOD IN THE FIRE, WE WILL NEVER BE ALONE IN IT

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were cast into the furnace, and wonder of wonders, they were seen by Nebuchadnezzar to be walking around with their bonds loosed, and one like unto the Son of God was with them in the midst of the flames. This had a salutary effect on Nebuchadnezzar, and he changed position completely and called the three martyrs "the Servants of the Most High God." He then gave complete freedom of worship to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and threatened his own people with death and destruction if they dare speak a word against these men or their God. He makes the amazing statement " There is no God that can deliver after his sort."

Many of God's dear people are called upon to pass through the fire from time to time in their lives, and it is in the fire that they come to know the intimate presence of the Lord in a way that they have never known before. They find that the fire only removes what is a trouble to them-- their bondage. The Lord will never leave us in the fire alone. Think of the precious promise that Jehovah brought to us, His redeemed people, through the prophet Isaiah. "Fear not: ...for I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire. thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." (Isa. 43:1-2) Remember that he has said, " I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." and that, in the final analysis, the fire will only consume the dross, and bring forth fine gold to the Glory of our God.

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