

Study in Daniel 3 Daniel-3

by William MacDonald

William MacDonald explores the faith and courage of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the face of persecution in Daniel 3.

Duration: 43:47

Scripture: Daniel 1:8, Daniel 2:28, Daniel 3:18, Matthew 6:33, 2 Timothy 1:12, 1 Peter 1:6-7, Revelation 13:16-17

Topics: "Studies"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the book of Daniel. He highlights the moment when King Nebuchadnezzar sees a fourth man in the fiery furnace, who he describes as the Son of God. The preacher emphasizes that the Son of God is always present with his people in times of trial. He also mentions the trend towards a unified religion in the world today, citing a meeting in Assisi where representatives of different religions were encouraged to embrace the same beliefs. The preacher concludes by emphasizing the importance of standing firm in one's faith, as demonstrated by Daniel and the three Jewish men in the story.

Transcript

To Daniel, chapter 3. Daniel, chapter 3. Thank you very much. Appreciate it. Nebuchadnezzar the king, this is verse 1, made an image of gold whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits.

He set it up in the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Then the command went forward that when the orchestra sounded forth, when all the trumpets blew and all the bugles blew, the people were to fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

And whoever didn't fall down, verse 6, and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning, fiery furnace. Verse 8. Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews. They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, O King, live forever.

You have made this decree. Verse 12. There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

These men, O King, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up. And King Nebuchadnezzar was absolutely flabbergasted.

He couldn't believe it. And he said in verse 14, Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up? I'll give you one more chance. If you don't do it, you'll be cast into a burning, fiery furnace, heated seven times hotter than usual.

Verse 16. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the King, O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning, fiery furnace, and he will deliver us from your hand, O King.

But if not, let it be known to you, O King, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up. I'm going to stop reading there. Last week we were in chapter one, and we read about Daniel and three of his friends, and how the King of Babylon tried to take them and make Babylonians out of them, and he wanted them to eat the food from the royal menu, and they absolutely refused.

They would not do it, and God worked it out for them in a wonderful way. Then in chapter two, which we're skipping over, the King has a dream, and he dreams about this great image, and nobody can interpret the dream for him. Crisis.

Finally, somebody, a man who can interpret the dream for you, his name is Daniel, and Daniel came forward, and he said, no problem. He said, no, don't thank me. He said, it's not up to me, but he said, I can tell you the interpretation, and among other things, he said, Nebuchadnezzar, you are the head of gold in that image, and you know what? I think the King got a giant case of egotism over that.

He was the head of gold. I mean, everything after that became very inferior in value. All the rest of the image, he was the head of gold, and so I think chapter three follows quite logically after that.

He just was too filled, as I said, with vitamin I, all about himself, and so it says at the beginning of chapter three, he made an image of gold, whose height was 60 cubits, its width 6 cubits. He set it up on the plain of Dura. This seems to be the result of what the King had learned in chapter two.

An image of gold. What kind of an image was it? Was it a human image? I don't think so. I think it was probably more like Washington Monument, don't you? I know it'd really be kind of a weird human image to be 90 feet tall and 9 feet wide.

Nobody's that thin. But think of it as an obelisk like the Washington Monument, and it's gold-plated. You say, what do you mean gold-plated? It's made of gold.

Well, I know, but there isn't enough gold in all the world to fill the Washington Monument. If you took all the gold in the world, it would only be a portion of the Washington Monument, and I don't know how tall the Washington Monument is. Anyway, this image is set up.

Now, there's something very interesting here. Notice the prominence of the number six in his image. Strange the way things happen.

60 cubits tall, six cubits wide. A cubit, of course, is 18 inches, isn't it? Approximately 18 inches. Then that makes you think, ah, it's time for me to turn over in my Bible to chapter 13 of Revelation, isn't it? I don't

think you want to get past that verse before you turn over to Revelation chapter 13 and begin verse 16.

And here we're reading about the Antichrist, who still is to come. Nebuchadnezzar, in this instance at least, might have been a foregleam of the Antichrist. And it says, verse 16, he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

Here is wisdom, that him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it's the number of a man. His number is six, six, six. And six is the number of man in the Bible, isn't it? Uh, seven is the number of perfection.

Six is the number of man. It's short of perfection, huh? Makes us think of what verse? All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And so when the Antichrist comes, of course, this is going to be the crucial number, six, six, six.

I personally believe the Antichrist will have his capital in Jerusalem, Israel. And it's interesting, last time I was there, all the buses in Jerusalem and all the public vehicles, their license plate began with six, six, six. Upcoming events cast their shadows before them.

Chapter two, you have the dedication of this great image. And in verse two, I mean, in verses two and three, the guests who came. I'm telling you, this was a real occasion.

The prominent people from all the kingdom came for the dedication of this great statue. And then, of course, in verses four through seven, you have the command to worship. This king not only wanted a unified government, he wanted a unified religion.

And you know, that's the trend in the world today. Everything is shaping up for a unified religion. Pope had this great meeting in Assisi not so long ago, and he had representatives of Islam, representatives Hindus, Buddhists, animists, voodooists, all of them, they were there for this meeting in Assisi.

And they were all to embrace, embrace one, they all were to believe the same thing. But complications arise. In that whole kingdom, there are three fellows who refuse to bow down and worship that image.

And Daniel isn't mentioned here, is he? He may have been off on a trip, but I think it's significant. Daniel was the key man in chapter one, and the other fellows were, well, they went along with him, of course. The other three fellows went along with him.

I think they learned a lesson from Daniel in chapter one. Here they are, putting it into practice in chapter three. We talked last week about the influence of a life upon others.

Well, these three Jewish fellows, they watched Daniel, they saw that his spine was made of steel. He was no jellyfish, he was no marshmallow. Daniel, now they get the chance to put it into action themselves, and they have it, and they take their stand, and they're accused.

Notice verse eight. Therefore, at that time, certain Chaldeans came forward. Chaldeans, that's Babylonians, they were citizens of the kingdom, and accused the Jews.

They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, O King, you, O King, have made a decree, and so forth. Verse 12. There are certain Jews whom you have said, what's this all about? Well, I think you see the green-eyed monster here, don't you? These Chaldeans are jealous.

They're jealous of these three Jewish fellows. You, O King, have made them, you know, you've given them positions of prominence in your kingdom. Here, they won't bow down and worship your image.

I don't think Daniel was there. I think he was off on a business trip. Somebody said, happy is he who dares to be in the right with two or three.

Great thing to be able to be with two or three and stand up against the whole kingdom, huh? Or, in our case, stand up against the whole world. Well, there's something happier than to be in the right with two or three, and that's to be in the right when you're all alone. And that's what our young people have to do in schools and colleges today.

They're all alone. Just take a stand for the Lord. Happier to be in the right, even if the choice two or three shouldn't be there with you.

Well, the king calls them in, and he said, is it true? I mean, this is the greatest shock he's had in quite a few days, that three fellows, three Jewish fellows, whom he had favored as he had favored, should have the audacity, should have the impudence to refuse to bow down and worship. He couldn't believe that any mortal upon the earth could have the presumption to dispute his will. He can't conceive that one person employed under his patronage would dare to resist his bidding.

And indignantly, he demands, is it true? He won't believe it. He must have been misinformed, I think, don't you? Can there exist a being in all the kingdom, in all the dominions, who would have the audacity to insinuate that it would be wrong to bow down and worship his image? In fact, it's quite condescending on his part to say, is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my God to worship the gold image which I have set up? And he says, now, if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and sorcery and symphony with all kinds of music, you fall down and worship the image which I have made good. But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery fire.

Listen to this, and who is the God who will deliver you from my hands? What a challenge, huh? Listen, there was somebody up in heaven who heard that. God looking down from heaven heard that creature, creature, saying, who is the God that can deliver you from my hands? I tell you, the whole case was settled right then. When the king defies the God of heaven and earth, what God is able to rescue you? And, you know, people still get into tough situations, and the world still says that to them.

God is able to rescue you. A challenge to the most high God. Well, it brings up, of course, our attitude toward human government, doesn't it? What should our attitude toward human government be? Well, Jesus said it, render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, unto God the things that are God's.

Obey the powers that be, Paul tells us in Romans chapter 13. Or, as we've said before, obey, pay, pray. But the other side of that picture is we ought to obey God and not men.

Once again, as it was in chapter one, now a great time to rationalize. I mean, just think of a furnace. Just think, sitting here in the comfort of this room this morning, of a furnace blazing, and it's heated seven times hotter than normal, and you're going to be thrown in.

How do you like that? Are you comfortable? Well, I mean, the wheels of your mind could go along pretty well then, couldn't it? You could say, well, okay, I will bow down. I'll just bow down once, and God knows that although my body is in that prostrate position, my heart's not in it. I don't recognize this

nebuchadnezzar as my gun.

You could have rationalized that way. Or they could have said, well, he's been pretty good to us. He's advanced us to positions of prominence in the kingdom, and if we don't bow down, we won't get any further raises and pay.

So, why don't we just compromise in this situation, just bow down and worship? After all, it would just be a physical thing. It wouldn't be a spiritual thing with us, you know. It would just be the outward position of our bodies, but not the inward position of our souls and spirit.

We would still be true to Jehovah. Or they could have said, well, we have to live, don't we? Can the dead praise God? I like what Vance Havner said. I'm going to quote some of this to you.

It's really good. Vance Havner said, Christians don't have to live. They have only to be faithful to Jesus Christ, not only until death, but unto death if necessary.

When a man becomes a Christian, he loses the right to his own life. Boy, that's a shocker, isn't it? Is that what you tell people when you lead them to Christ? When a man becomes a person, when a person becomes a Christian, he loses the right to his own life. He's not his own.

He's bought with a price. He's the personal property of Jesus Christ, bought and paid for with the blood of Calvary. Isn't that good? So easy for us to forget that.

For him, living and dying are incidental. I think that's beautiful. He's here to glorify Jesus Christ, whether by life or by death.

Whether he lives, he lives unto the Lord. Whether he dies, he dies unto the Lord. Whether he lives or dies, he is the Lord's.

To live is Christ, and to die is gain. Anything that compromises that all-out devotion is to be refused at any cost. A pinch of incense to Caesar may seem innocent enough to others, but to a Christian, it's anathema.

For he knows but one God, and he will not by life or by lip pay even a gesture of allegiance to another. If a pagan guild would compromise his vows, he would lose his job first. He doesn't have to eat.

He only has to be faithful to Jesus Christ. I like this. He says, "The desire of the spiritual man is to die right rather than live wrong." How do you like that? "The desire of the spiritual man is to die right rather than live wrong." A sure mark of the spiritual, mature man of God is his nonchalance about living.

His nonchalance about living. The earth-loving, body-conscious Christian looks upon death with numb terror in his heart, but as he goes on to live in the spirit, he becomes increasingly careful of the kind of life he lives while he's here. He will not purchase a few extra days of life at the cost of compromise or failure.

Why, that's good. He will not purchase a few extra days of life at the cost of compromise or failure. He wants most of all to be right, and he's happy for God to decide how long he will live.

He knows that he can afford to die now that he's in Christ, but he knows that he cannot afford to do wrong, and this knowledge becomes a gyroscope to stabilize his thinking and his acting. I think that's beautiful. They could have said that, well, the dead can't serve the Lord.

The dead do not praise the Lord, and after all, we have to obey the King, and we have to think of our families as well, if they did have families. What did they say? Talk about nonchalance, about living or dying. They said, okay, we don't have to answer you.

I think they were respectful when they said it. They said, we don't have to answer you in the matter. Isn't that great? Boy, I tell you, I'd like to have been on the sidelines cheering them.

Better to burn than to play the coward. Better to die than deny the truth. He said, our God is able to deliver us from the burning, fiery furnace.

The difference, I want to tell you, that faith. Imagine me standing in front of the mouth of a blast furnace, and I'm about to get cast into it. Feel the heat already.

Imagine me to have the faith to say, nothing, God can deliver me from that burning, fiery furnace. I think that's tremendous. They didn't only say that, they said, He will deliver us.

He will deliver us from your hand, O King. Spurgeon said, you may be in the midst of the greatest trial of your life, but never forget the God who allowed this trial promises to deliver you. The purpose of this experience is to display the mighty power of God.

He will teach you lessons you will never forget, and upon which you will reflect for many years to come for strength and encouragement to face ensuing trials. But you must believe God, be able to say from the depths of your heart, my God, whom I serve, is able to deliver me. And then they added this word, but if not, our God is able to deliver us.

Our God will deliver us, but if not, did their faith take a tumble? No, their faith didn't take a tumble. Even if God were not to deliver us, we still wouldn't bow down and worship that idol. We will not worship the gold image which you have set up.

I tell you, why does God have this in the Bible? I'll tell you why. Take a weak, frail flesh like me and inspire me with confidence and faith in the Lord, and excite in my mind firmness and steadfastness in upholding the truth of God. Our responsibility is to obey the Lord and leave the consequences with him.

Well, we come to verse 19, and just look at verses 19 through 23. It's incredible here. Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury.

The expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The expression on his face reflected his inward seething, his inward fury, his inward anger at these three young Jews. Therefore he spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated.

Well, frankly, it didn't make too much difference anyway, did it? I mean, when you have a furnace of fire, what difference does seven times more make? You're going to be gone quickly anyway. Sure. Seven times seven, of course, the number of fulfillment, the number of perfection.

I guess that meant as hot as they were able to do it in those days. They were pretty good in those days. Solomon had a blast furnace down at what is now Eilat there.

He had devised a way where the wind coming down a ravine just went right into the mouth of his smelting furnaces, where they had the copper. So, don't think of them as backward people. They weren't backwards.

They knew what they were doing. And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and cast them into the burning, fiery furnace. That's why.

They cast them in. I can just see them. I can see them doing it with a great deal of love.

They just love to get rid of these disturbers of the peace. Pretty ghastly, isn't it? How could three young fellows ever face up to this? Well, frankly, they couldn't in their own strength. And I think you've got to, when you read something like this, and you sit there in the meeting this morning, you think, man, I could never have done it.

Of course you couldn't do it. Neither could I, unless the Lord gave you the grace to do it. In other words, dying grace for dying days.

That's what it amounts to. You don't get the grace for something like this till you need it. They didn't have it yesterday, but they had it when the time came for it to happen.

I think that's a good lesson to save us from lives of worry and and discouragement and all the rest. Listen, if God wants me to do something, God will give me the grace to do it. If God wants me to die for him, God will give me the grace when it comes time to do it.

Do you ever worry what it's going to be like when it comes down to die, if the Lord doesn't come? Oh, I think about that all the time. I think, that's nonsense to worry about that. I could worry about better things than that.

Because I've proved the Lord enough in my life already that when I need special grace, the grace is there. The grace is there. So this is supernatural.

It's not natural for three fellows. You know, I don't get the impression that they were squirming or wiggling or trying to break the bands that tied them or anything else. I think they were composed.

As many of the martyrs down through the history of the church have been composed as, well, really wonderful. As your day, God says, so shall your strength be. As your day, not as your year, as your day, so shall your strength be.

Deuteronomy 33, verse 5. Dying grace to dying grace for our dying days. We experience that grace in the hard times of life, when we face surgery, where the doctor says it's cancer, or when a loved one dies. I want to tell you, humanly speaking, the thought of being cast into that furnace would give me cardiac arrest.

I wouldn't die from the flames. I'd die from a heart failure. But they didn't.

They didn't have cardiac arrest. They were bound, and they were cast in, and that thing was so hot that the executioners were scalded, were burned to death. Just in the process of casting the three Jewish fellows in, the fellows that were casting them in got burned.

Absolutely incredible. And it says the three men fell down in the midst of the furnace. The king looks in.

He was a bit unnerved, didn't he? After three of his men got burned to death, he looked into the furnace. I hope he had a glass window to look through, or something like that. He looked in, and he saw a fourth there.

He saw a fourth man, like the Son of God. And, you know, this is one of the crucial parts of the story. The Son of God is always in the of fire with his people.

I think back through the history of mankind, there have been a lot of furnaces of fire. I don't mean literal fire, but I mean God has been with his people. The Lord Jesus has been with his people, and a lot of them.

I think that's what Paul refers to. He said, I may fill up that which is left behind of the sufferings of Christ. The Lord Jesus still suffers with his people.

He's been in many furnaces with believers down through the ages, and he will be in many more as well. He says, I will never leave you, nor forsake you. It doesn't make any difference how hot the fire is.

Christ is there with his own. You know, I think it wouldn't be too bad to be in a furnace of fire with Christ. I feel that.

I think I might have mentioned this before about Stephen. When Stephen was stoned to death, you know, what a horrible way to die, being stoned to death. And he looked up, and he saw the Lord Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

I think just the sight of the Lord Jesus is enough to remove any pain or discomfort from the stones. And I felt that when I thought this about the furnace of fire. Just to have his presence there is really all that you need.

And Christ is always there with his own. It's interesting here, what's behind all this? Religion. Religious hatred is always the worst form of hatred, and it's thanks to the most fiendish deeds.

The persecutions that have taken place as a result of religion are some of the most unsparing, cruel. And we, as believers, can expect to be thrown into furnaces of the fires of persecution. It's coming, friends.

We see it increasingly all the time. Gene Gibson shares his Time magazines with me. I've noticed for the last month, there's a section that's no longer in Time magazines called Religion.

They don't have it in there anymore. And you know how anything to do with Christianity, with Christ, is banned. It's not politically correct to talk about that.

And it's wrong for you to try to win somebody else to Christ. You can try to win them to the Democratic Party or the Republican Party. That's okay.

Don't try to win anybody to Christ. It's known as proselytizing, and you must not do that nowadays. That's divisive.

We're trying to get all the people together, they say, you know, into one great world religion. Jesus said, If you were of the world, the world would love its own. But because you're not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

What a picture! The king looks in, he sees the Son of God in there, and the men are loose, and they're walking around in the furnace. You say, it's impossible. I know, with God, all things are possible.

Of course it's impossible. But it happened. It's history, and it's happening still.

So, the king summons them to come out. Really, he can't help but get a thrill out of this. You see, that king, I think his knees are knocking by now, don't you? He was the big brave guy at the beginning of the story, but now he's not so brave.

And now I think he's scared. Wonderful. And the king, what's he going to do? Notice verse 24.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished, and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counsellors, Did we not cast three men bound into the furnace in the midst of the fire? They answered and said, True, O king. Look, he answered, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt. The form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

His eyesight was never better than it was at that moment, was it not? Twenty-twenty vision, O Nebuchadnezzar. Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning, fiery furnace and spoke, saying, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out and come here. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came from the midst of the fire.

End of the story? No, that part's still to come. The satraps, administrators, governors, and the king's counsellors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose body the fire had no power. You talk about asbestos.

The fire had no power. The hair of the head was not singed. That doesn't say it wasn't burned off.

It says it wasn't singed. Nor were their garments affected. What kind of garments were those? Phew! And the smell of fire was not on them.

Beautiful, isn't it? Man, a man only has to smoke a cigarette nowadays, and the smell of fire is on them. The smell of cigarette is on them, you know. Even when you go in a bus or an elevator or something, and you're not smoking, you come out with the smell of cigarette on you.

And here they're cast in the midst of this furnace, and not even the smell of fire upon them. I tell you, that's glorious, isn't it? It's great to be on the Lord's side, is all I can say. Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Phew! He's turned into a worshipper! Not completely yet, but anyway. "...who sent his angel and deliberative servants, who trusted in him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own god." Dear friends, if these fellows had compromised these words by Nebuchadnezzar, it would never have been spoken. We were thinking this last week with the fellows about Samson, you know, and his long hair was a symbol of his separation.

And if Delilah could get at that, his separation, she could get at his power. Our power as believers is in separation to God, separation from the world. These fellows are living proof of it as well.

"...therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be cut in pieces." Phew! That's quite a butcher job to take a whole nation into it, isn't it? That's what it says. "...and their houses shall be made an ash heap, because there is no god who can deliver like this. Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the prophethood of God." They could have rationalized it.

We don't bow down in worship, we won't get promoted. They didn't bow down in worship, and they got promoted. What do you think about that? Well, I think it's really wonderful.

"...the ropes that bound them hadn't even confirmed them." The fire was a very discriminating fire. Don't you love it? The fire knew not to burn, not to singe their hair. It knew not to burn their clothes.

It knew not to even leave a smell of fire on their clothes, and yet it knew to burn the ropes that bound them. That's wonderful, isn't it? I call that a discriminating fire. I love the hymn that says, "...when through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie, my grace all-sufficient shall be thy supply.

The flame shall not hurt thee. I only design thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine." God can do anything. There's nothing too hard for God.

Really, the whole story makes your head swim in a way, and yet that same God is still alive today, is still delivering people from burning fiery furnaces. And then the Jews are promoted. Spurgeon says, "...if you stand up for Jesus, and the right, and the true, and the pure, and the temperate, and the good, not only will you be delivered, you'll do great good." This Nebuchadnezzar, he says, was a poor piece of goods.

"...yet he was compelled to acknowledge the power of these three decided and holy men. They were thrown into the furnace, and they came out of it. What said Nebuchadnezzar, just now it was, the image that I have set up, now he declares that no man shall speak a word against the God of Israel on pain of being cut in pieces." What's the message for us in this wonderful story? Well, let me go back, first of all, to the day when the Caesars were in power, in Rome, you know.

And Caesar commanded that everybody walk up to the altar and take a pinch of incense and put it on the fire of the altar. And if you did that, you'd live. If you didn't do it, you'd die.

Now, it was really quite easy. You only had to do it once. And you didn't have to, you could go and do it and go and worship any God you wanted to worship.

It was all part of it. All you had to do was take that pinch of incense and put it on the fire. The worship was no sense to test of your orthodoxy.

It was a test of your political loyalty. But the Christians wouldn't do it. They had to say, as they put that pinch on the altar, they had to say, Caesar is Lord.

And they wouldn't say it. They said, Jesus is Lord. They refused to do it.

Many of them were terribly persecuted. Many of them put to death. I think I've told you before the story of Bishop Cranmer, one of the bishops in England, and I was reading again about him this last week.

Hard to believe. And he was under terrific pressure to renounce his faith in Christ as the only way of salvation. And finally, under terrible duress and terrible pressure, he signed a recantation.

He realized what he had done. He had really denied the Lord when he signed that recantation. And he went to them and he told them.

He took back that recantation. They said, burn at the stake. And he said, well, just go ahead.

He was led out to be burned. And as he was led out there to be burned and got to the fire, he first held his right hand and put it in the fire. And he said, perish this unworthy hand, the hand that had signed a recantation.

And he was burned to death for his faith in Christ. Perish this unworthy hand. So what you read about Daniel has gone on in other places in the history of the world.

I've told you before, I think the story of Ruskin and the girl with whom he fell, the Christian girl with whom he fell in love. He was not a believer and she was. And he proposed marriage to her.

And she said to him, do you love me more than you love Jesus Christ? He said, I'd have to say that I do. She said, I couldn't marry you. It's the same kind of devotion that you have here with these three men, just different circumstances.

She was stricken with tuberculosis, went to bed, proved to be terminal eventually. But even after that, he was still in love with her. And he asked to have a meeting with her.

And they said, Ruskin wants to see you. And she said that word to him. She said, do you still love me more than you love Jesus Christ? He said, I still do.

She said, it would be no good from an interview. She died. She died.

Fiery furnace for her, no doubt. You know what the emotions are like, what love is like, what romance is like. She loved Jesus more than she loved any of that.

And she died in loyalty to the Lord Jesus. A lot of people today are going through fiery furnaces. Maybe they're saved and they have an unsafe family.

And boy, an unsafe family can really make it rough on you today. It really can. It's a fiery furnace.

But over and over again, I've seen, I've said to them, just be patient. God will work it out. We have an intern and his wife from Australia right now.

And what they have gone through, and what they are still going through, is really something. Unsafe family. Everyone understands.

Family doesn't understand. You know, this chapter has a prophetic significance as well as a historical significance. I used to get pictures of Israel being miraculously preserved, though scattered, among the Gentiles, don't you? After all, the Old Testament is a Jewish book, and here you have three Jewish fellows miraculously preserved out of the fires, just as Israel has been.

No nation in the world has ever suffered as Israel has suffered. And Israel should have been extinct long ago, according to all human considerations. But it's been miraculously preserved.

You know, the Bible speaks about another furnace of fire, where there's weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, grinding of teeth. Even if these Hebrew fellows had been consumed, their suffering would have been over in a few seconds, wouldn't it? It would have been over in a few seconds. In hell, it's never over.

It's never over. Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. In hell, men and women suffer eternally.

The smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever. What a wonderful thing it is to be saved, to come to the Savior, put your faith and trust in Him, and know that the torment and the fire, your eyes will never see. Shall we pray? Father, we thank you for this wonderful story, true story, of three men who stood true to you, even under the threat of a furnace of fire, how you preserved them through that fire, how you were glorified and magnified as a result of their faithfulness and steadfastness and endurance for you.

Oh, we pray that for those of us who are believers, that we might have that same willingness to stand for Christ, never to be ashamed of Him or of His words in our generation, that we might be true to Him. And for any who might not be saved, who've never taken their stand for the Lord Jesus, we think of that terrible furnace of fire, hell, where people will suffer for eternity, people who had the chance, but they never took it. We just pray today for a great ingathering of souls.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

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