

"Living for God in the Midst of Difficult Times"

Part 6

Daniel 3

Introduction: Today as we come back to our study of "Living for God in the Midst of Difficult Times" we are again going to look into the book of Daniel. Today we are going to pick up the text in Daniel 3 where we will find Nebuchadnezzar will have a golden image built and then erected in the plain of Dura. He will then demand that everyone in his kingdom is to bow down and worship the image.

This command will be a real test of the faith of Daniel's friends which they will endure. We will get to their stand as we work our way through this text but for today I want us to look at the events which led up to the command.

I. The Cause

At the end of chapter 1 Daniel and his friends have been in Babylon for 3 years and God gave them wisdom and understanding far above everyone else who was serving the king. Then in chapter 2 the king had a dream which none of his men could interpret but Daniel was able to interpret the dream.

Notice Daniel 2:31-36

This imager which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream was a picture of the kingdoms of the world from Babylon to the Kingdom of Jesus Christ in the future.

Notice Daniel 2:37-45

Let me just stop here for a moment and say something which needs to be made very clear. **GOD DOES NOT SPEAK TO US IN DREAMS AND VISIONS TODAY.** Today He speaks to us through His Word. Be very careful about people who claim they were given a special dream or vision from God. There are some who will claim they were given a special revelation from God through a vision or a dream. Let me explain the problem with that belief. If someone has received a **NEW REVELATION** from God then that means it is a **TRUTH** that is beyond what the Bible teaches.

Revelation 22:18

¹⁸ For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:

This verse makes it very clear that we have been given the COMPLETE BIBLE. If someone says they have a NEW REVELATION from God then they are adding to the Words of this Book. These people who claim they have died and gone to heaven or hell and then returned with a NEW REVELATION are NOT to be believed! There is no NEW REVELATION.

Now some people would say they know a certain person who had a dream or a revelation. Let me just say that EXPERIENCE does NOT override the Truth of God's Word. Someone would ask, "How do you explain what happened to them?"

Exodus 7:10-12

¹⁰ And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the LORD had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent.

¹¹ Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments.

¹² For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.

Remember that Satan is the great counterfeiter. But in the end it will be the Word of God that will prevail.

Let us get back to Daniel now.

When Daniel interpreted the dream the king fell down and worshipped Daniel. He then promoted Daniel.

Notice Daniel 2:48

It was then that Daniel made a request on behalf of his friends.

Notice Daniel 2:49

It is this promotion which sets up the events of Daniel 3. Before this these men served the king in his palace but now they have been given positions of authority. They are now set over the affairs of the province of Babylon and in this position they now have the

ability to influence the people of Babylon with their stand for their God. It is now that the enemy will step in and turn up the heat.

Application:

Let us not miss the lesson for us in this entire picture. When we find ourselves in a position where we have the ability to influence the lives of people around us it is then that we can expect that Satan will set his sights upon us in an attempt to get us to compromise our stand for God.

Genesis 39:1-7

And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither.

² And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

³ And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.

⁴ And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.

⁵ And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.

⁶ And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured.

*⁷ **And it came to pass after these things**, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me.*

When Joseph was promoted into a position where he could influence others it was then that Satan attacked him through the wife of Potiphar in an attempt to get him to compromise his stand for God.

Both Joseph and Daniel's friends were placed into positions where they could be used in a way to magnify God and Satan despised the thought, so he was determined in both situations to apply pressure and get all of them to compromise.

II. The Command

Notice Daniel 3:1

After Daniel's interpretation of the dream the king apparently became full of pride when he heard he was the head of gold and so he gave an order to build an image of gold 90 feet (9 stories) high and 9 feet wide. It was then set up in the plain of Dura which means it would have been visible from a great distance away. It was probably not solid gold but it would have been overlaid with gold. This image represented the king for he now saw himself as a god.

Notice Daniel 3:2

When the image was complete the king gathered all his leaders and together for the dedication of the image.

Notice Daniel 3:3

Now when we come to this verse we see that it is basically the same as verse 2 so the question is, "Why is this verse here?"

This verse is here to help us to see that everyone who was invited came to the dedication of the image. We see here the power which the king had over his kingdom. He is a picture of the anti-Christ who will rule the entire world in the Tribulation Period. These people lived to please the king. They were no doubt always looking for a promotion. If they had any convictions at all they completely suppressed them.

When I see the turn out here I see a group of people who were like puppets. They did not exercise their minds and think for themselves but instead they followed after the government that was over them. Whatever they were told they did. They are like sheep being led to the slaughter.

Now we are not told if Daniel's friends went to the dedication but I believe if they did go they stood way in the back. They would have nothing to do with idolatry which was exactly what this was.

Application:

Let me just take a moment and remind you that we are commanded to live in obedience to the laws of the government UNLESS the government commands us to do something that is contrary to God's Word.

Acts 5:26-29

²⁶ Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.

²⁷ And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them,

²⁸ Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

²⁹ Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

III. The Coercion

Notice Daniel 3:4-6

This is pressure!! This was not a bluff. If there was anyone who would not bow down to the golden idol then they could be sure they were going in the furnace.

IV. The Conviction

Notice Daniel 3:7-12

Now before we look into this let me just answer a question that probably came to your mind and that question is, "Where is Daniel in all of this?"

He most likely was out of town and I believe that God had arranged it that way. These young men had followed the leading of Daniel for the last 3 years and now it was time for them to stand on their own. I believe that God took Daniel away because he was a crutch these young men leaned on. God wanted them to learn to trust in Him and not in Daniel.

Application:

I have seen this happen many times over the years. Back at Bedford Bible Church many years ago Pastor Ritchie was the man who everyone in the church leaned on including me. Then God allowed him to get sick and all at once the crutch was taken away in my life and I was forced to stand on my own. This was one of the best things that ever happened to me.

Now let us get back to the conviction of these 3 young men.

When everyone heard the music they bowed down and in all the king's province there were only 3 men standing and of course there was someone watching who took the news directly to the king.

These 3 had learned something very valuable under the leadership of Daniel and that was the Word of God was the compass for their lives. Let me show you why I say this.

Exodus 20:1-5

And God spake all these words, saying,

²*I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*

³*Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*

⁴*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.*

⁵*Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;*

The first two Commandments forbid these 3 men from bowing to the golden idol.

1. Thou shall have no other gods before me.
2. Thou show not make or bow down to any idols.

They did not need to pray about what to do because God's Word was crystal clear. These young men would NOT be pulled into idolatry nor would they be forced into it.

Application:

The subject of idolatry is something that truly needs to be addressed within the church today. Many believers today view idolatry as something that was only a problem within the Old Testament. They think of an idol as a golden calf or a wooden image. But the truth is idolatry was a problem within the early church and it is a problem within the church today. Let me define an idol so we can better understand what they look like.

"An idol is anything which takes the place of God within our lives. It is anything we desire more than we desire God."

Let me give you a list of potential idols:

- ✓ Possessions
- ✓ Money
- ✓ Children
- ✓ Spouse
- ✓ Physical attractiveness
- ✓ Exercise
- ✓ Sports
- ✓ Food

The list goes on and on but here is the point: these things are not sinful but they can become sinful when we allow them to become idols and when we desire them more than we desire God.

Now I have told you this before and I need to say it again. Idolatry is so very dangerous because demons can attach themselves to the idol and work through that idol to lead a believer far away from God.

1 Corinthians 10:19-21

¹⁹ What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?

²⁰ But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

²¹ Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.

Conclusion:

I was wondering how to close this message out and there was something that came to my mind that we need to consider. When we pray we need to not ask God to keep us safe as we often do but we need to ask God to make us strong in our stand. We need to ask God to reveal any idols which have worked their way into our lives. Then we need to have the courage to set them in their proper place.