

THRIVING IN BABYLON • SCARED • DANIEL 3:1-30 • 5/28/2023

MAIN POINT

We are working through a sermon series called: Thriving in Babylon that covers Daniel chapters 1-6. It's not easy to live a godly life in an increasingly godless society. An Old Testament hero named Daniel, shows us that it can be done. He not only survived but thrived and impacted an entire empire while he was at it.

Today's sermon will focus on Faith in the furnace - Dan 3:1-29.

However, this lesson takes a similar passage in a new direction. The theme of this lesson is: Faith enables us to move from overwhelmed to overcomer. God promises to walk with us through the ﬁre and storms of life.

# INTRODUCTION

In this session, we’re going to talk about what the Bible has to say about facing our fears.

**What was your biggest fear when you were a kid? What fears—funny or serious—do you have now?
What is your greatest fear right now?**

## ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ DANIEL 3:1-12.

**How would you summarize this situation?**

**When have you felt like the odds were stacked against you?**

**When have you felt speciﬁcally targeted or caught in the middle of a bad situation? How did you respond?**

**Would you respond any diﬀerently today?**

## ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ DANIEL 3:13-23.

**How did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego express faith in God even if the situation didn’t work out to their beneﬁt?**

**Why would it be worth living and dying for God if He didn’t rescue them?**

**When have you had to stand up for what you believed in, even in a tense, intimidating, or even dangerous situation?**

**What gave you the courage and conﬁdence to do the right thing?**

## ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ DANIEL 3:24-30.

**How did these men experience God’s presence and power?**

**What’s something new you learned from the account of the ﬁery furnace in Daniel 3?**

Although God doesn’t always miraculously intervene in such an obvious way, He’s always at work in our lives.

## ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ISAIAH 43:1-2.

**What encouragement does Isaiah 43:1-2 provide?**

Fear looms large when we’re overwhelmed by the circumstances of life. Faith enables us to move from overwhelmed to overcomer. God promises to walk with us through the ﬁre and storms of life. When we trust Him to bring about His good purposes, we can face our fears with courage.

# APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**How does knowing that Jesus is in control aﬀect your attitude toward fear and the future?**

**How have you seen Jesus come through during a particularly diﬃcult time in your life?**

**What can you do to face your fears with faith this week?**

# PRAYER

Pray that your small group, friends, and family will stand strong in faith together. Express your fears to God. Pray that you won’t bow to fear but will stand in faith, glorifying your Father, who’s always with you.

COMMENTARY

DANIEL 3:1-30

3:1. The events of Daniel 3 probably took place shortly after Daniel explained the king’s dream (see Dan 2), although some estimate that it could have been 10 or even 20 years later. Babylonian records indicate that there was a revolt against Nebuchadnezzar during the tenth year of his reign, so this may have led to the king’s desire for the loyalty test described here. The gold statue was not likely solid gold but was instead overlaid with it. Nebuchadnezzar probably decked the entire thing in gold to negate the message conveyed by the statue of his dream, wherein only the head was gold and signaled that

the Babylonian Empire would only be temporary. The location of the plain of Dura has not been conclusively identiﬁed. Daniel was not involved in the events here since he remained in the capital city “at the king’s court” (2:49) while other oﬃcials—including his three friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—were called to Dura to show their loyalty.

Had Daniel been there, he too would have refused to bow to the image.

3:2. The exact meaning of these seven positions is unclear other than that they are listed in descending order of rank.

3:4-5. Three of the instruments mentioned—zither, harp, and drum—are the only Greek words in Daniel. The presence of Greek words does not mean that Daniel was written later in the Greek period. Even Assyrian inscriptions that predate the Babylonian period refer to Greek instruments and musicians. Although some conjecture that the gold statue was of Nebuchadnezzar himself, this is unlikely because the Babylonians did not believe their king was divine. More likely, the image was of a Babylonian god, perhaps Nebuchadnezzar’s patron Nabu or the chief Babylonian god Marduk. Nebuchadnezzar made this demand as some form of loyalty oath to him personally.

3:6. Incineration in a furnace of blazing ﬁre—a punishment that Nebuchadnezzar had also used on two Judean false prophets, Zedekiah and Ahab (Jer 29:22)—was a normal Babylonian penalty as seen in the Code of Hammurabi, Sections 25, 110, and 157. Perhaps this furnace was built to smelt the gold for the image Nebuchadnezzar had made.

3:8. “Chaldeans” is both a general ethnic term for the Babylonian people and, as used here, a speciﬁc term for priests who served as astrologers, soothsayers, and wise men in the king’s government. Their motive in denouncing the three faithful Jewish men was not devotion to the king’s demand but rather a hatred for the Jewish people. Hatred of the Jewish people is often on display in the Bible, as with Haman (Est 3:5-6). It reﬂects a hatred of the God of Israel and is expressed through oppression and attempted genocide of His people (Ps 83:2-5).

3:17-18. The king oﬀered Daniel’s friends a second chance to worship the idol, but they persistently refused. The Aramaic imperfect verb yeseziv (“He can rescue”) in this context indicates possibility and not certainty. They were saying that God might deliver them or He might choose not to do so. Their faith in God did not rest on the belief that He would perform a miracle, but that their sovereign God could be trusted. They asserted that if God chose not to deliver them from this punishment but instead allowed them to become martyrs for Him, they would still refuse to serve the king’s gods or worship the gold statue. This is one of the strongest examples of steadfast faith in the Bible.

3:19. The enraged king gave orders to heat the furnace seven times hotter than was customary, an idiom for “as hot as possible.”

3:23. The furnace was built on a small hill or mound with openings at the top and side. So the three men fell into the furnace from the top, and the king was able to see four men in the furnace (v. 25) as he looked in through the side opening.

3:25. The king saw in the furnace a fourth ﬁgure who looked like a “son of the gods.” This may have been an angel or even a pre-incarnate appearance of God the Son.

3:27. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the furnace, Nebuchadnezzar and all his government oﬃcials saw that the ﬁre had no eﬀect on the bodies of these men. Not only did the ﬁre fail to burn their hair and clothing, but they did not even have the smell of ﬁre on them. Hebrews 11:34 cites this miracle of faith, referring to those who “quenched the raging of ﬁre.”

3:28-29. After Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were spared, Nebuchadnezzar saw that the God of Israel was greater than all other gods. Even so, he remained a worshiper of many gods, falling short of full devotion of the one and only true God.