

And He Will Deliver Us

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[0:00] Before Pastor Colin preaches to us, Daniel chapter 3, I'm going to be reading from verses 1 through to verse 7.

! This is the Word of God. King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold whose height was 60 cubits and its breadth 6 cubits.

He set it up on the plain of Jura in the province of Babylon. Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent together the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Then the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

And they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. And the herald proclaimed aloud, You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up.

[1:20] And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning, fiery furnace. Therefore, as soon as all the peoples had heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, all the peoples' nations and languages fell down and worshipped the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Well, we have been in Daniel in the evenings together in recent weeks, and so we're continuing that series this morning.

And we're going to pick up this morning right where we last left off, here in chapter 3. It's in this chapter that Daniel's three friends come to the forefront of the narrative.

And they're called by their Babylonian names throughout, which are Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Now, we were introduced to these men in chapter 1.

They're mentioned again for us even in chapter 2, but it's here that they really are taking center stage in this episode. It was Daniel who was center stage, you might say, in chapter 2.

[2:34] He was the faithful representative of God before this pagan king, Nebuchadnezzar. Well, now it's Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They are now the faithful representatives of God before this same man.

So let's set the stage just a bit based off the verses that Sam just read for us, those first seven verses of the chapter. Some time has presumably passed between chapter 2 and chapter 3. We don't know exactly how long, but it's clear that the dream from chapter 2 and its significance has not left Nebuchadnezzar's mind.

And he sets out here in chapter 3 to defy, to openly defy, what God had revealed in that dream through Daniel's interpretation of it.

You see, in that dream, Nebuchadnezzar had seen that statue, and it symbolized four kingdoms in history, kingdoms of men, and they would all be destroyed by God and his heavenly kingdom, which arrived in this world through King Jesus.

[3:44] Now, interestingly enough, Nebuchadnezzar actually praised Daniel. He praised Daniel's God for revealing the dream and its interpretation. We see that at the end of chapter 2.

And Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face. He paid homage to Daniel. He even treated him in a way that you might expect deity to be treated, with offering and incense offered up to him.

Now, twisted as Nebuchadnezzar's thinking might have been, this is definitely a favorable response by him. I mean, he even says, So this is all rather unexpected.

It really doesn't make sense when you think about it. I mean, the dream and its interpretation were very clear about the fate of Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom. His kingdom would be conquered first by another kingdom of man, and ultimately all the kingdoms of men would be destroyed by God and his kingdom.

His kingdom alone would stand forever. That certainly is not what a king full of pride in himself would want to hear. You're done for, little Nebuchadnezzar.

[4:58] Little Nebi, your kingdom's going to be pulverized. You don't stand a chance against the God of heaven and his kingdom. Or as Isaiah 40, 17 says, All of the nations are as nothing before the Lord.

They are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness. And so you, Nebuchadnezzar, you think that you and your kingdom are so great.

Well, God says you and your kingdom are nothing, less than nothing. If we can even wrap our head around that. We're talking in negative numbers now about the power and prestige of your kingdom, Nebuchadnezzar, in comparison to God's.

Wow. That's some serious humbling right there. You would think that Nebuchadnezzar would have rejected the dream and its interpretation. That he would have been offended by Daniel.

That he would have killed Daniel even. But he does just the opposite. He praises and even promotes Daniel. He gives this favorable response to Daniel and even to Daniel's God.

[6:08] Though God had revealed a not so favorable future for Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom. However, this praise of Daniel and more importantly his God is short-lived and it's shallow as we now come to chapter 3.

Nebuchadnezzar may have believed that Daniel's God was the revealer of mysteries, but it becomes apparent here in chapter 3 that he doesn't believe Daniel's God could bring to pass the mysteries that he had revealed.

He doesn't actually believe that God can do what God has said he would do. In fact, just the opposite. Nebuchadnezzar wants to show, No, my kingdom.

My kingdom will rule over all. And Nebuchadnezzar wants to show, My kingdom won't be destroyed. That God can't do what he revealed in that dream. So Nebuchadnezzar drew some inspiration from the dream, you might say.

And he builds himself a great image. A great statue. Now, we aren't told exactly what the statue is, but if we take into account the dream of chapter 2, where Daniel says the head of gold is Nebuchadnezzar, I think there's good reason to see that Nebuchadnezzar here very well could have taken that idea and ran with it.

[7:33] It makes a lot of sense for him to have thought, I'm going to make an image of myself. Now, perhaps even a deified image of me being deified in that image. He's perhaps thinking of himself as being like one of the pagan gods in a sense.

Well, here is this statue built on the premise of the statue in the dream. But a statue that was even more impressive in a sense than the statue that was seen in the dream.

Because remember, in the dream, only the head is gold. And Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar, Well, the head is you. And Nebuchadnezzar must not have liked that. Only the head is me?

Only the head is my kingdom? No, I want to be the whole statue. And so he goes and he builds his own. And it's not just a head of gold that we now see, but it's a whole statue of gold.

He takes this statue then. He sets it up on the plain of Dura. And Nebuchadnezzar intentionally, it seems, located this statue on a plain where the ground is flat.

[8:36] There's no way that you wouldn't have seen this statue. It would have stood out from miles away. It was 90 feet tall. That's something of an eight or nine story building.

And the fact that it was set up even gives the impression that perhaps like, say, the Statue of Liberty, it was put on something of a pedestal. So you could see it from all around on this plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.

The text also says that. Now, why say that? Isn't that obvious and perhaps a bit repetitive to say in the province of Babylon? Of course, Nebuchadnezzar would build this statue in the heart of his kingdom in Babylon.

Or as chapter 1 calls it, the land of Shinar. But Daniel's drawing our attention to something very important here. There in the province of Babylon, in the land of Shinar, something else was built.

Genesis 11 tells us. Not a statue, but a tower. The Tower of Babel. And what was the purpose of the peoples of the earth who gathered together to build that tower?

[9:46] To make a name for themselves. Not much has changed in the thousands of years since. We're right back in the land of Shinar, in the province of Babylon, where the Tower of Babel once stood.

And now a statue stands there, elevated above the plain for all to see, as Nebuchadnezzar now wants to make a name for himself.

Well, to do that, to be famous, you need to surround yourself with people. So Nebuchadnezzar does that. He gathers all the government officials. He gathers all the leaders in Babylon for this impressive dedication ceremony.

They came as representatives of all the peoples of the land. And they're given this very clear, idolatrous command. A command to bow down and to worship this statue, this golden image. And all the peoples obeyed. Now, were they actually eager to do it? We can't really know, because they were compelled by threat of death. If you don't bow down and worship, you'll be killed.

[10:53] You'll be cast into the burning, fiery furnace. So all the peoples at this dedication ceremony, well, they complied. All the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials.

They did what they were told. Whether they were really bought in or not, they fell down, and they worshipped. All that is but three. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

And by their act of defiance, the stage is set, you could say, for a contest of sorts. A contest between Nebuchadnezzar and these three godly men.

And it's a very specific contest. A contest of confidence. So this morning, we're going to see the confidence of Nebuchadnezzar pitted against the confidence of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

And we'll be reminded of who has good reason to be confident. We'll be reminded of whose confidence is well-founded and whose confidence is futile. So first, let's consider the confident challenge of Nebuchadnezzar.

[12:07] And I'll pick up the reading of Daniel chapter 3 in verse 8. Therefore, at that time, certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews.

They declared to King Nebuchadnezzar, There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the fairs of the province of Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar said, So here is Nebuchadnezzar.

They're facing off against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These Jewish men who had remained faithful to God. These men now take center stage in the narrative this morning.

You might have noticed that Daniel is nowhere to be found. He must have been off somewhere else because surely he wouldn't have complied with this command.

[14:09] But Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were there and they refused. Now let's take that in for just a moment. They could have made some lousy excuses.

They could have sinfully justified bowing down. They could have said, Well, in our hearts we're not actually worshiping this image. In our hearts we're still faithful to God.

God still knows what's in our hearts. And isn't it just the heart that matters? And if it comes to it, if Nebuchadnezzar asks us directly, we'll tell him who we worship.

But since he hasn't asked, we'll do the outward thing, but we're not really meaning it. They could have done all kinds of foolish, sinful, mental gymnastics.

But they didn't. They simply obeyed. And it really is that simple. To have participated in that ceremony would have been to commit sin.

[15:10] The worship of that golden image that was happening, it violated not one, but two of God's ten commandments. And the very first two of them. Number one, you shall have no other God before me.

And number two, you shall not make for yourself a carved image. And the second command even says very explicitly, you shall not bow down to them or serve them.

We might want to get all wrapped up in only thinking of the heart here. The heart matters. But so do our outward actions. God cares about what's going on in here.

And God cares about what's going on out here. Remember, that truth, the heart and the actions that flow from it, that truth is embedded there in the ten commandments. Don't bow down to the idols.

Not just don't worship them in your heart. Of course that's true, but don't bow down to them either. Because what's in the heart overflows to what's shown in the hands.

[16:14] So Nebuchadnezzar, he commanded that they would bow down in Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They took God at his word, and they didn't. They obeyed God and not man.

Well, those pagan officials who were there at this dedication, they noticed this act of rebellion against the king. It was very clear. Here are these three men who remained standing as everyone else fell upon their faces.

So these men bring the defiance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to Nebuchadnezzar's attention. King, you need to follow through on your threat.

Well, upon learning this news, Nebuchadnezzar is furious. He flies into this rage. He has these three godly men hauled before him. He's demanding answers from them.

He's challenging them right then and there to bow down and worship when the music is played. Are you ready? We're going to do it now. And if they don't, well, he is going to carry out his threat.

[17:17] He's going to throw them into the fiery furnace. This is such an intense scene. Nebuchadnezzar is making these demands. He's putting these men to the test.

He's threatening them with their lives. And then on top of it all, here's that confident challenge as he ends all of his ranting and raving with this question in verse 15.

And who is the god? Who will deliver you out of my hands? Now that is a question, but it's obviously a rhetorical question.

Nebuchadnezzar is sure there is no god who can save you. Not from my fury. Not from my fire. There is defiance in his question.

There is certainty in his question. This is a confident challenge that Nebuchadnezzar is sure that he's going to end up on top at the end of this. That he will be supreme with him above any other rival to his power and his kingdom.

[18:21] In Nebuchadnezzar's mind, there is no god who can save these men. Not even the god of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. A god that Nebuchadnezzar is familiar with.

Because this is the same god that Daniel serves. And Nebuchadnezzar knows something of this great god in heaven. He knows that he is the god who reveals mysteries. He's the only god who could reveal the mysteries in my dream.

Nebuchadnezzar came to learn this in chapter 2. But it seems that he's not convinced that the god of all knowledge is also the god of all power. Or you could say, he pays no attention to this god. The god of heaven. So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they paid no attention to Nebuchadnezzar and his image. And now Nebuchadnezzar is saying, fine, I pay no attention to your god.

He's of no concern to me. He can't do anything to stop me from throwing you in my fire. So Nebuchadnezzar's really changed his tune, hasn't he? From chapter 2.

[19:22] From saying, your god is god of gods and lord of kings to now challenging their god and asking, who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands? Nebuchadnezzar's hands.

Let's talk about his hands for just a moment. So he says, no god can save you out of my hands. Now look back at chapter 2 for just a moment. Look at what Daniel says to Nebuchadnezzar. beginning in verse 37. You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory, and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the children of man, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the heavens, making you rule over them all.

So God gave everything that Nebuchadnezzar has into his hands. Even God's own rebellious covenant people, God gave them into his hands.

That's how the book of Daniel begins. Chapter 1, verse 1. In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

[20:43] And the Lord gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into his hand with some of the vessels of the house of God. So everything has been given by God into Nebuchadnezzar's hands.

And of course, when we think of receiving something from someone into our hands, we think of this mental picture of our hands outstretched, open, ready to receive.

Well, what a change we now have in that mental picture to now Nebuchadnezzar going from hands outstretched and open to now clenching his hands into fists and holding them tight to his chest.

God's people. That includes these three godly men standing before him. They've been given into his hands. But Nebuchadnezzar failed to understand that what had been given to him by God could also be taken from him just as well.

Taken just as easily as it was given. And Nebuchadnezzar wanted to think that whatever he had was his. No one can strip them from me. They're in my clutches.

[21:49] You're mine. No one, not even your god, can save you out of my hand. Nebuchadnezzar was so very confident about that. Well, Nebuchadnezzar wasn't the only one who was confident in this narrative.

And as we now see his confidence, it's pitted against the confidence of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. If Nebuchadnezzar had a confident challenge, well, Daniel's friends had a confident answer.

And we see that beginning in verse 16. Chapter 3. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter.

If this be so, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning, fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.

Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated.

[23:04] And he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and to cast them into the burning, fiery furnace. Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments and they were thrown into the burning, fiery furnace.

Because the king's order was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning, fiery furnace.

So here we see these three men were not intimidated by the king, this pagan king. He had just tried about everything to force Daniel's friends to bow down and to worship his golden statue.

I mean, he made them stand face to face before him. That's intimidating enough, standing before a king, let alone a king who is said to be filled with rage. And he's now demanding answers from you. And now he's putting you to the test right there on the spot with the musicians ready to play their instruments. This is such a high-pressure situation. Nebuchadnezzar's threatening them with death and he's challenging their god.

[24:19] It's not hard to imagine someone caving in this kind of situation. But Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not intimidated by the confident challenge of this king and in fact they matched his confidence as they opened their mouths to speak and they said, we have no need to answer you in this matter.

In other words, we don't need to defend ourselves. We aren't going to try to convince you that this is just one big misunderstanding. We aren't going to try to talk our way out of this danger.

We're certainly not going to concede and compromise. Nope. Instead, we're going to entrust ourselves to our faithful God and they are confident in his ability to save them.

Our God can deliver us from the fiery furnace and he will deliver us out of your hand. So there really is this contest of confidence. On the one side is Nebuchadnezzar and he's saying, no, God can save you out of my hand.

And on the other side is Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and they're saying just the opposite. Our God will save us out of your hand. They are confident in God's ability to save them even if it costs them their lives.

[25:43] Now that's a strange thing to say. They are confident in God's ability to save them even if it costs them their lives. But that is the case and they are not confused about what they're saying.

We see it in verse 18. Because there they say, but if not. Meaning, but if God doesn't deliver us from the burning fiery furnace.

If he doesn't deliver us out of your hand, our trust in God will not be shaken. Our obedience will still be the same.

So whether or not God spared their earthly lives doesn't change their obedience to him. Either way, they're saying, whether we live or we die, we won't bow down to you.

That's what they say in verse 18. Be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up. Their resolve to obey is undeterred.

[26:48] Sounds a lot like the disciples in Acts 5 as they said to the Jewish authorities, We must obey God rather than men. Now some might say, well they don't really seem to have a lot of confidence in God then, do they?

I mean, they admit that God may not actually deliver them. We could argue that, well at least Nebuchadnezzar holds his position firmly. He doesn't waver. He doesn't give any kind of but-if statements like these three godly men but that would miss the point because Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are looking beyond just this earthly life.

They are confident that they will be delivered. It's just whether they will be delivered from death or through death. From death or through death.

One way or another they will be delivered from Nebuchadnezzar's hand. And they will be with God for all of eternity. They were confident in God to save them even if it cost them their lives.

And the cost was worth it. You could say they had counted the cost. Think on what Jesus said. For whoever would save his life will lose it.

[28:09] But whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospels will save it. These three men in Daniel 3 were considering the life to come. A life lived for all of eternity in whose kingdom?

God's kingdom. The eternal kingdom that would come as that stone crushing every other kingdom and grow to be a great mountain. That kingdom, that eternal life was worth it.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego could say take our lives King Nebuchadnezzar, take them and God will deliver us to an eternity with him. We'll trust him.

We'll obey him. Our allegiance is to the king of heaven. We bow to him. And as they said very explicitly in verse 18, we won't serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up. Well, that confident answer didn't sit well with King Nebuchadnezzar. He has the reaction we might have expected in chapter 2 when the dream didn't go so well for him. That reaction is exactly what we find here in chapter 3.

[29:19] He heats up that furnace seven times hotter than normal. It's so hot it's killing the men tasked with throwing Daniel's friends in. But what comes of those three godly men?

We read of that next in verse 24. Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?

They answered and said to the king, True, O king. He answered and said, But I see four men unbound walking in the midst of the fire and they are not hurt and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods.

Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace. He declared, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out and come here. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire and the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men.

The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them. Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who has sent his angel and delivered his servants who trusted in him and set aside the king's command and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own god.

[30:54] Therefore, I make a decree, any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses laid in ruins for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way.

Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon. These three men were prepared to yield up their bodies rather than turn their backs on God.

And God did save them from death that day. He saved them, of course, in one of the most miraculous of ways as Nebuchadnezzar saw there that fourth figure in the fire with them.

Now, who exactly that is we can't know. Nebuchadnezzar attributes it to an angel. Some would say that's perhaps Christ himself in pre-incarnate form.

The text doesn't explicitly tell us but this much is clear. God is with them there in the fiery furnace. God's presence went with them into the midst of the flames and God protected them.

[32:10] He preserved their lives by his power. The fire had no power over them. And so, in astonishment, Nebuchadnezzar asked that they come out.

I love even just that subtle little phrase there that he called them out. He couldn't go get them. He couldn't force them to come out. He's like, could you please come out now?

I need to speak with you. I know I threw you in there but I'm not going to be able to rip you back out so I guess I have to be calling out to you. Could you please come out now? I need to talk with you not so close to the fire.

And he saw with all of his officials that they were perfectly fine. Not even a hair on their heads had been singed. Even the smell of fire wasn't upon them.

I hate the smell of fire after like a camp out. Now some people love that smell. I get home immediately put the clothes in the hamper got to get the smell off we have to be clean but Daniel gives us this great detail to show the supernatural power of God.

[33:14] If we can get the smell of camp fire on us after being relatively close to fire how much more should the smell of the great burning fiery furnace how much more should that have been upon them?

And yet here are these men thrown into this fire and yet they're not even smelling like they had been in it. You would have never known they had ever been in the fiery furnace if not for the decree that Nebuchadnezzar made.

He published the news far and wide published the news of the God who rescues his people by his power. There is no other God who is able to do this because there is no other God but him.

He is the one true God. We know that. He is the great God in heaven. Well Nebuchadnezzar was humbled that day. His confidence proved to be futile because his confidence was in himself while the confidence of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego proved to be well founded indeed because their confidence was in God.

And that brings us then to the final point this morning in our sermon. We've seen the confidence of Nebuchadnezzar, we've seen the confidence of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and now let's consider finally the sure, confident hope of the Christian.

[34:39] And to do that I want to turn back in the narrative of Daniel chapter 3. Have you ever wondered how these godly men even found themselves in this situation?

How they found themselves at this dedication ceremony? It wasn't just open to the general public. Now Nebuchadnezzar had brought these men to this ceremony.

He had intentionally gathered the leaders of his kingdom together. Daniel really drives that home for us. How many times have we heard the list of titles repeated in this chapter?

It's very detailed. Those satraps, prefects, governors, counselors, magistrates, all of the officials of the province. That's who was there. They were the representatives of all of the people of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom.

And Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were among them. They were supposed to be there. They weren't getting kicked out at the door by the bouncer for the dedication service. Nebuchadnezzar had them brought because he had appointed them.

[35:47] He had put them in positions of leadership in his kingdom. And why did he do that? Well, that takes us back to chapter 2.

Daniel and his friends were promoted to positions of leadership in the kingdom because Daniel had been able to reveal the dream and its interpretation to Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel had succeeded when no one else could because God had revealed it to him. And by what means had God revealed it? As Daniel and his three friends had gone to God and prayed.

As Daniel had pleaded with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, cry out for mercy to God. They prayed to him. So if we're thinking here, we see that God answered their prayers.

God revealed the dream and its interpretation. Nebuchadnezzar promoted them into kingdoms, into positions of leadership in his kingdom, which then landed them there at that dedication ceremony with that golden statue now towering above them on the plain of Dura.

[36:55] Do you see the seemingly surprising providence of God in all of this? We know that nothing happens apart from God's sovereign plan. We've heard it once, say it again this morning, he declares the end from the beginning.

We know that he brings all things to pass, using the means of human agency so often to do that. Like Nebuchadnezzar appointing Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to these government

positions, which would later place them in this particular trial.

But that was ultimately God's good, wise, perfect plan for those three men. God ordained that very day, as he ordains every day.

But our attention is drawn to this day, and to this trial that God ordained. We can see it traced all the way back for us in the narrative of Daniel to chapter two. Well, so too, every trial that we endure, we can trace it back to God's perfectly sovereign plan, and his perfectly wise plan, and his perfectly good, loving heart for his people.

Here was a great trial that God brought into these men's lives. And you really could say that he brought them to it. He brought them to this dedication ceremony, not to do evil to them, but to be glorified through them, and through their resolve to remain faithful to him.

[38:36] Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, I would think, would have understood. God brought us into this. How could they have such confidence if not that they were resting in God's plan?

God brought us into this. He will see us through it. Can't help but think of Psalm 138. We just heard preached not long ago by Pastor John, though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life. You stretch out your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and your right hand delivers me. The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me.

Your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands. And the Lord did fulfill his purpose for those three men that day by sparing them death in that particular trial.

But their confidence wasn't wrapped up in being preserved from death. Their confidence was wrapped up in God's perfect wisdom. We'll trust him even if it means losing our lives in this life.

[39:49] That's the same confidence that you and I should have in Christ. Not that we'll be spared any sort of persecution or suffering for our faith, but that God will fulfill his purpose in us.

So we trust in him. Because we may not be spared suffering. In fact, Jesus tells us we should expect it. Peter even says in 1 Peter 4:12, Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you.

Perhaps he even had the burning fiery furnace on his mind when writing that. We should expect to suffer for our faith. God may spare us from suffering, but God may not.

There is no guarantee that he will save us even from death for our faith. So many Christians, even Christians today, they give up their lives in service to their king, martyred for their faith.

We hear of testimonies of Christians in the Middle East and the Far East, Christians in North Africa put into the same kinds of life or death situations as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

[40:58] And God does not spare them from death in those situations. Just as he didn't spare Stephen in the book of Acts, or James, or the apostle Paul, countless Christians have died because they refuse to bow the knee to any other but Jesus Christ alone.

God did not save them from death, but he did certainly save them through it. Just as Paul himself says, Paul, who would be killed for his faith, the Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom.

To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. That's the kind of confidence that Daniel's friends had. That's the same kind of confidence.

Paul can say, the Lord will rescue me from every evil deed. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego can say, our God will deliver us out of your hand, O King, whether from death or through death.

The Christian has a confident hope. In Christ you can be sure God will bring me into his heavenly kingdom because our hope is in the king of that kingdom.

[42:11] The king himself, who was not delivered from death, but he was delivered up to die, delivered up to be crucified for the sins of his people.

Christ died in our place so that we would be spared a fiery furnace far more fierce than the one there in Babylon. The fires of hell, where the worm never dies and the fires are never quenched. You can be sure, Christian, that you will never know that death. The second death, as Revelation 20 calls it, the second death has no power over you.

We hear in Daniel chapter 3 that the fiery furnace had no power over Daniel's friends. Well, the power of the fire of hell has no power over you.

And just as they had no smell of fire upon them, you, Christian, will never have the smell of hell's fire upon you because Christ took the punishment for your sins, because he died in your place, because he endured the wrath of God that you might be forgiven.

[43 : 22] sin. But if you're not trusting in Christ this morning, if he is not your only hope of salvation, then the wrath of God remains on you.

And the fiery furnace of Daniel 3 is nothing compared to the fire that awaits in hell. So repent of your sins. Turn to Christ in faith.

Turn away from your life of sin. Turn to Christ. Believe in the Son. Trust in him for the forgiveness of your sins. Stop running towards the fiery furnace of hell and instead run to Christ, the only Savior for sinners.

And he saves every single sinner who comes to him. You will find safe refuge in him. Safe refuge for all of eternity. And for us who are in Christ this morning, we are just as safe and secure as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, just as safe and secure as they were as they walked in the midst of the fire.

Because God was with them and he's with us as well. And like Paul, we can say with sure confidence, he will rescue me from every evil deed and will bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom.

[44 : 41] Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we do give you thanks that you give us models worthy of imitation in the scriptures.

Your people down through the ages who have resolved to obey, who have lived faithfully before the kingdoms of men, not intimidated but confident.

And Father, we thank you that we have a savior that we can run to, that we can then have a confidence found in him, that we can be confident like the men of Daniel chapter three, that we can say, no matter what happens to us, our hope is sure and it's surely founded upon Christ.

And so we pray that you would give us that confidence, that you would make us to be a people who are standing strong in our faith, no matter what trials we face, joyfully looking to you, joyfully trusting in you.

And so we pray that your spirit would work in us, grow us in grace, we pray. We ask all of this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.