

**DON'T STOP BELIEVIN'**  
**05.02.2021**

**DANIEL 3:1-30**

**INTRODUCTION**

- A. Have you ever said, "Well, I'm never going to do that again?"

When I started at WellSpring, I had hundreds of books in my personal library and 3-4 months ago I thought, I don't have a place for those books and I don't even need all those books. And I found out about a place here in Nashville that buys used books.

So I went and bought 8 medium size boxes for \$10 at Lowes. And then I sorted through all my books in our garage putting them in categories. And then I went through each category and decided which ones to save and which ones to sell.

I put the ones I was going to sell in boxes. I'm guessing it was about 200-250 books. I had like 15 different hard-copy books by Max Lucado. Leadership books by John Maxwell. I even had a book about Tennessee Football, *The Glory Years*. But it was so old that the words on the pages had faded.

Once all the books were in boxes, we took a Saturday morning and drove 40 miles one way to drop them off – 80 miles round trip. I had so many books, have you ever seen one of those bins/carts they use in Post Offices? I dropped them off at the counter and was told: "Give us 3-4 weeks to research what your books are worth and then we will mail you a check."

I had no idea what to expect as far as a check, but I had, I'm guessing, a couple of thousand dollars in the books, \$10 in boxes and tape, plus 80 miles worth of gas. I was hoping for \$150?

Would you like to guess how much the check was for?

I have a picture of the check...\$35.84.

All that work and effort for \$35.84!

And I said, "Well, I'm never going to do that again!"

You've said it: "Well, I'm never going to do that again!" You gave it your best shot. You tried. You were patient. You took the first step. You trusted. And you got hosed. And you said, "Well, I'm never going to do that again."

Or...or...you prayed...you sacrificed...you trusted God...you believed... and...and maybe you felt that God let you down. And at that moment, you said, "Well, I'm never going to do that again." And ever since then, based on your own experience, you haven't trusted God. You've thought, "It only makes things worse."

- B. For the past few weeks, we've been in this message series called, "I do believe, but help me with my unbelief." We've talked about there is a tension that almost all of us have between doubt and belief. And we've encouraged people not to ignore doubt, but we also want to encourage people to lean into the truth.

- C. Let's compare it to a fear of flying. Someone looks at a Boeing and says, "I'm not going to get on that thing. It's so big and nothing that big should be off the ground. Surely, it's not safe."

But someone who understands physics would say, "If you understand lift and thrust, you shouldn't have any fears of flying around at 30,000 feet." Boeing says, "You wouldn't believe the amount of safety features in that \$90M plane." The airline mechanic says, "You wouldn't believe our rigorous our maintenance program is." And the pilot says, "You wouldn't believe the amount of training we go through so that you can be safe."

But that person who has a fear of flying says, "Yeah, all that may be true, but I still don't feel like it's safe."

- D. We may have doubts about God and you may feel like: It's not safe to trust Him.

But today, let's lean into this great story found in the Bible, in the book of Daniel, about three young men (and their names are Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego – and for some reason, it's always in that order. We never call them Abednego, Shadrach, and Meshach. It's always Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego). And what they would say to that doubt is this: ***God can be trusted. And at that moment when we needed God the most, it's then that we saw Him clearly.***

- E. I'm going to be reading Daniel 3 from "The Message" translation of the Bible and the words will be up on the screen. But if you want to follow along in one of the Bibles under the chair in front of you, you can turn to page \_\_\_\_.

## **IN THE WORD**

### **Daniel 3:1-3**

King Nebuchadnezzar built a gold statue, ninety feet high and nine feet thick. He set it up on the Dura plain in the province of Babylon. He then ordered all the important leaders in the province, everybody who was anybody, to the dedication ceremony of the statue. They all came for the dedication, all the important people, and took their places before the statue that Nebuchadnezzar had erected.

- Arrogance causes people to do some strange things, doesn't it?
- Nebuchadnezzar became king of Babylon about 600 years before the birth of Jesus.
- If any other king or nation got in his way, he crushed them. He was the most powerful man on the earth.
- He had turned Babylon into a beautiful city with wide thoroughfares and magnificent buildings. His palace was enormous and it's said that he built the Hanging Gardens of Babylon – one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.
- Nebuchadnezzar also plays a major role in the Bible because he invaded and conquered Palestine, including Jerusalem.
- When Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem, at the time, Zedekiah was the king of Judah. Nebuchadnezzar takes the sons of Zedekiah and kills them in front of Zedekiah's eyes and then has his eyes gouged out – so that the last thing Zedekiah ever saw was the death of his sons.

- Nebuchadnezzar then had Zedekiah bound in shackles and then took him back to Babylon to be part of his king collection. A conquering king wouldn't always kill a conquered king, but would take him back home and would parade them out during big occasions to show how great and powerful he was.
- And if a man like that tells you what to do, what do you do?
- Nebuchadnezzar, the most important and powerful man on earth, decides that a statue needs to be built – a statue of himself. It's 90' high. Most likely it was made out of wood and over-laid with gold. It was an shiny, tall, impressive sight.
- And Nebuchadnezzar wants all the people to worship him by bowing down to the statue.
- He then tells all the important people they need to be there for the dedication ceremony. And right before it begins it says...

“They all took their place.” They all took their place. They all took their place.

- In other words, they were EXPECTED, by Nebuchadnezzar, to be in a certain place.
- You stand here. You sit there. You do this. You do that. You do what you are expected to do. Take your place.
- When the most powerful man on earth tells you what to do, do you have a choice? Yes? No?
- When those moments come, what we do, all depends on what we believe. Or who we believe in.
- And honestly, only you can determine your place. You get to decide. No one else can determine what you believe or what you do, except you. Other people can try to teach you what to believe or influence your beliefs or inspire you to believe; but only you can choose.
- Society says, “This is the way you act.” God says, “Don't live according to the ways of the world because it leads to death.” And sometimes, we aren't even sure what to believe.
- They took their place.
- And whether we realize it or not, we are taking our place. We are choosing whether to follow the ways of the world or to follow the ways of Jesus. We can't do both. We can only sit on the fence for so long before real life happens and decisions have to be made.

### **Daniel 3:4-6**

A herald then proclaimed in a loud voice: “Attention, everyone! Every race, color, and creed, listen! When you hear the band strike up—all the trumpets and trombones, the tubas and baritones, the drums and cymbals—fall to your knees and worship the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Anyone who does not kneel and worship shall be thrown immediately into a roaring furnace.”

- Well that doesn't seem to be much of a choice, does it? Worship the statue or die.

### **Daniel 3:7**

The band started to play...and everyone—every race, color, and creed—fell to their knees and worshiped the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

- Like they were expected, everyone took their place – they fell to their knees and worshipped the golden statue of Nebuchadnezzar.

Over my lifetime, America has changed a lot. It seems America has changed more rapidly in the last few years.

- Nearly 250 years when our nation’s forefathers revolted against Britain in 1776, as much as we were declaring our Independence from England, our founding fathers were declaring their dependence on God. America was a wonderful place for religious freedom. And our whole nation was centered around Christian principles.
- If you’ve ever been to Washington, D.C., which is an awesome place to take your family, the tallest structure in the city is the Washington Monument. There is a cap on the Washington Monument with these words in Latin: “Laus Deo.” Laus Deo translates to “Praise be to God.” “Praise be to God for this nation!”
- And for a long time, America felt like the kind of nation that was pleasing to God.
- But I think, if we were honest, we would admit, things have changed.
- Now, it feels like the U.S. is more like Babylon.
- We worship at the feet of celebrities and entertainers and influencers, who all seem to be saying, “Look at me. Look at how great I am. Look at how great my life is. Look at me.”

And yet, we have a choice. What is going to be our place in this world? In this culture?

### **Daniel 3:8-12**

But not everyone did what they were expected.

- When Nebuchadnezzar had conquered Jerusalem, he had brought back to Babylon the best, bright and smartest young Jewish men to serve him. It’s not hard to imagine that he also had the most beautiful, young Jewish brought back to serve him as well.
- But these young, smart Jewish men were given opportunities and privileges to live comfortable lives – even as servants of the Nebuchadnezzar.
- And when the big band started playing, not everyone got down on their knees and worship the statue of Nebuchadnezzar.
- Verses 8-12 tells us that some men approached the king and said, “Didn’t you say that everyone had to bow and that if they didn’t they would be thrown into the fiery furnace? Because there are some Jews here – Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego – who are pretty important – and we don’t see them bowing. We don’t see them worshipping you, O King.”
- When you don’t bow, you stand out.
- When you don’t bow to the philosophies of this world, you stand out.
- When you don’t bow to worship what the world worships, you stand out.

### **Daniel 3:13-18**

Nebuchadnezzar is furious and orders that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought before him. And the king asks them...

“Is it true that you don’t respect my gods and refuse to worship the gold statue that I have set up? I’m giving you a second chance—but from now on, when the big band strikes up you must go to your knees and worship the statue I have made. If you don’t worship it, you will be pitched into a roaring furnace, no questions asked.” And then he asks them this question: **“Who is the god who can rescue you from my power?”**

- Everyone worships something...or someone. Everyone worships something...or someone. Nebuchadnezzar knew that if Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego weren’t going to worship him, they had to be faithful to some other god. And he’s asking, *“What god are you worshipping that can rescue you from me?”*
- I believe that one of the reasons we have doubt is because something happened to create doubt that God could be trusted. Something happened and God *didn’t* step in a rescue us. It was if God didn’t *seem* to care what happened to you. It’s maybe because you did what you thought you were supposed to do, but God didn’t do what He was supposed to do.
- Doubt is not trusting God.
- “Who is the god who can rescue you from my power?”
- Let me ask you this in another what: What god can rescue you from your hurt, your anguish, your grief, your pain?
- Who is the god who can rescue you from death?

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego [respond], **“Your threat means nothing to us. If you throw us in the fire, the God we serve can rescue us from your roaring furnace and anything else you might cook up, O king. But even if he doesn’t, it wouldn’t make a bit of difference, O king. We still wouldn’t serve your gods or worship the gold statue you set up.”**

- All of us have a choice. All of us get to choose. We may not always get to choose the consequences, but we get to choose – Am I going to doubt God or am I going to believe God?
- I want you to notice three things:
  - (1) Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were young men. We aren’t exactly sure how old they were, but they weren’t old. And if you are in your teens, 20’s or 30’s, I Timothy 4:12 says, “Do not let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, conduct, love, faith, and in purity.” You might be young, but you can have a strong faith. We shouldn’t use youth as an excuse.
  - (2) It helps to have friends who share your beliefs – who share your faith. It doesn’t matter how young or old we are, we need others in our life who encourage us to be faithful.
  - (3) But what really was it that helped them hold onto their faith in God despite what they were facing? It’s simple, they had already, at a young age, been through so much, and God had always been faithful.

They had suffered greatly. They had been watched Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon conquer their land. They had seen the horrors of conflict. They had been stripped of their freedom and taken into captivity, taken away from their families, and now found themselves in a foreign land serving under a King who thought he a God. And yet, they were strong in their beliefs and faith, because time after time, they had seen how God could be trusted.

And even if the outcome wasn't what they hoped for, they weren't going to take their place on their knees worshipping the statue of Nebuchadnezzar.

**"If you throw us in the fire, the God we serve can rescue us from your roaring furnace and anything else you might cook up, O king. But even if he doesn't, it wouldn't make a bit of difference, O king. We still wouldn't serve your gods or worship the gold statue you set up."**

- "Even if He doesn't..."
- Even if He doesn't save me from this disease...
- Even if He doesn't save my marriage...
- Even if He doesn't provide me with a new job...
- Even if He doesn't get me out of this situation...
- Even if he doesn't...
- That's the kind of belief in God that takes a little time and some serious experiences to develop.
- But faith...belief...is trusting God no matter what the obstacles or consequences.

### **Daniel 3:19-23**

Nebuchadnezzar, his face purple with anger, cut off Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace fired up seven times hotter than usual. He ordered some strong men from the army to tie them up, hands and feet, and throw them into the roaring furnace. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, bound hand and foot, fully dressed from head to toe, were pitched into the roaring fire. Because the king was in such a hurry and the furnace was so hot, flames from the furnace killed the men who carried Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to it, while the fire raged around Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

### **Daniel 3:24-26**

Suddenly King Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in alarm and said, "Didn't we throw three men, bound hand and foot, into the fire?"

"That's right, O king," they said.

"But look!" he said. "I see four men, walking around freely in the fire, completely unharmed! And the fourth man looks like a son of the gods!"

- The King is confused. Arrogant and proud people usually are confused when God gets involved.
- Nebuchadnezzar looks into the furnace expecting to see these three agitators to see look into the furnace and see them baking to a crisp. But, instead, he sees four people walking around in the furnace, not three. And Nebuchadnezzar said the fourth one "...looks like a son of the gods."
- Most scholars believe that this fourth person in the furnace with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego was Jesus.
- This is something that happens every so often in the Old Testament.
- Let's think about this: Why does Jesus show up? And why does Jesus show up only in the furnace? Why didn't Jesus show up when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were debating the king? Why didn't Jesus step in then and say, "Hey Nebuchadnezzar, don't be messing with my people."

- Author and Speaker Dr. Ray Pritchard says, “Jesus never manifests himself, except inside the furnace, at they very moment when they most needed to see him.”
- When we put our faith in Jesus, He can be trusted to do what is right and exactly what we need.
- When the finances are messy and we pray: Jesus can be trusted to do what is right and exactly what we need.
- When you’re lying in the hospital wondering about the future and you begin to pray? Jesus can be trusted to do what is right and exactly what we need.
- When you are threatened with the fiery furnace? Jesus can be trusted to do what is right and exactly what we need.

Nebuchadnezzar went to the door of the roaring furnace and called in, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the High God, come out here!”  
Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego walked out of the fire.

### **Daniel 3:27-28**

All the important people, the government leaders and king’s counselors, gathered around to examine them and discovered that the fire hadn’t so much as touched the three men— not a hair singed, not a scorch mark on their clothes, not even the smell of fire on them!

<sup>28</sup> Nebuchadnezzar said, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent his angel and rescued his servants who trusted in him! They ignored the king’s orders and laid their bodies on the line rather than serve or worship any god but their own.

And the Nebuchadnezzar makes a dramatic reversal. He says...

### **Daniel 3:28-30**

<sup>29</sup> “Therefore I issue this decree: Anyone anywhere, of any race, color, or creed, who says anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego will be ripped to pieces, limb from limb, and their houses torn down. There has never been a god who can pull off a rescue like this.”

<sup>30</sup> Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

- They went from the fiery furnace to the corner office.

### **APPLICATION**

- A. Do you know what the snail said as it rode on the back of the turtle? Wheee.

For some of us, God moves way to slow. He needs to move faster. But when we align ourselves with God and His ways and His timing, it’s a thrill.

- B. Trusting God is thrilling. It’s not always easy, but nothing is. So here are a couple of ways we can have a thrilling life trusting God...

- (1) We can rejoice when we suffer.
  - a. It was the previous suffering of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abegnego that God had used to prepare them for this moment.

- b. Romans 5:3-5 says, "We rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that sufferings produces perseverance, perseverance character, and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit."
  - c. Suffering begins a process that leads us from, sometimes, hurt and pain and disillusionment, to...eventually...spiritual growth.
  - d. And when people are going through hard, difficult times? Remember that God is trying to use that to draw people closer to Him. Let's avoid saying, "I'm sorry for you," when people are going through hard times. God is trying to use that to bring them closer to Him. We should never be sorry for what God is doing.
- (2) We should live remembering it's Jesus saves us from the fire.
- a. We live in a culture where the fires seem to be 7 times hotter than they ever were before.
  - b. In Acts 2, on the day the church began, Peter was preaching to a large crowd of people, and he urged them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."
  - c. Maybe you are thinking, "We can't save ourselves, can we?" Well, the truth is that Jesus has already done His part; our part is to reach out to Him. Jesus has already given His life for us on the cross, He's already thrown the life-preserver, but we have to grab hold of it. We have to grab hold of Jesus.
  - d. And we can expect culture to continue to increase the heat on those who follow Christ. It's a bad for society when it moves farther and farther from Christ, but it's often a good thing for Christians, because Christians have to decide, "What is my place here? Is it with the world or with Christ?"

## **CONCLUSION**

- A. You may have heard the story about the man who was out hiking when he slips and goes over the edge of a cliff, but at the last second, he's able to grab onto a small vine. His grips starts to slip, so he yells out, "Help? Can anyone help me?" No answer. Then he says, "God are you up there? Can you help me?" And a voice booms down from heaven - "I'm here. I will save you. Just let go of the rope."  
The man thinks for a second and says, "Is there anyone else up there who can help me?"
- B. A favorite verse for many people is Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight."
- C. God can be trusted and what He asks of us is to trust Him.
- D. Will you put your trust in Jesus?