

STANDING STRONG – Don't Bow Down

Sunday, August 12, 2018

Daniel 3 New International Version (NIV)

The Image of Gold and the Blazing Furnace

3 King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, sixty cubits high and six cubits wide,^[a] and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. **2** He then summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up. **3** So the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before it.

4 Then the herald loudly proclaimed, “Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do: **5** As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. **6** Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.”

7 Therefore, as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp and all kinds of music, all the nations and peoples of every language fell down and worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

8 At this time some astrologers^[b] came forward and denounced the Jews. **9** They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “May the king live forever! **10** Your Majesty has issued a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music must fall down and worship the image of gold, **11** and that whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into a blazing furnace. **12** But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up.”

13 Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, **14** and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? **15** Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?”

16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, “King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. **17** If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us[c] from Your Majesty’s hand. **18** But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”

19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual **20** and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. **21** So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. **22** The king’s command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, **23** and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, “Weren’t there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?”

They replied, “Certainly, Your Majesty.”

25 He said, “Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.”

26 Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, “Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!”

So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, **27** and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them.

28 Then Nebuchadnezzar said, “Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king’s command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. **29** Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way.”

30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

In Daniel Chapter 1 we learned that in order to stand strong we must recognize and deal with those things that erode the foundations of our faith and relationship with God

In Chapter 2 we saw the importance of looking to God looking to God for hope, for answers, for wisdom, for strength, and in all seasons and circumstances.

Here in Chapter 3 we find the story Along with the Story of the three Hebrew children, which along with the story of Daniel in the Lion's den, may be one of the most recognizable stories of this Old Testament book. Not only is it easily recognized, but it is easy for us to understand as well since we are not dealing with hard to interpret prophecies of the future. But that doesn't mean we just as easily apply its principles to our lives. In fact, it can be very difficult at times to apply the truths of this story, which we can quickly summarize as - **Don't Bow Down**

Now let's talk for just a minute about why that is...

1. Now perhaps we just don't make the CONNECTION between what they went through and the things that we face in life that require us to stand strong. I mean, let's admit it, it is highly unlikely that we will face an identical situation in our lives. (i.e. bowing down before a gigantic golden statue)
 - a. Although if you happen to be here after the rapture you might just have to face something similar
 - b. We might find it easier to see a correlation between what the Hebrew children went through and what people face who live in circumstances where it is illegal to be a Christian or where being so could result in severe physical persecution or even death
 - c. But even though we may not be asked to bow down to a golden statue, or face extreme persecution for our faith, as Christians, there are issues that we need to take a stand for and not bow down to what culture, or friends or family are asking us to bow down to.
 - d. What is bowing down
 - i. To give in....
 - ii. To compromise...
 - iii. to go along with the crowd...
 - iv. Anything that goes against the truths of God's Word
 - v. Anything that violates our faith
 - vi. Anything that opens up the door for greater temptation

vii. I'm talking about things like

1. Worship of false idols (anything that takes preeminence before God)
2. Murder, Abortion
3. Lying, Cheating, Stealing
4. Coveting
5. Sex before marriage
6. Living together (and having a sexual relationship) before marriage
7. Same Sex Marriage and Sexual Relationships
8. A myriad of other sexual sins (i.e. Adultery, pornography, pedophilia, having sex with animals, etc...)
9. Gender Fluidity
10. Honoring the Sabbath
11. Acceptance and of new cultural norms when it comes to things like drugs, alcohol, entertainment, modesty (just because culture says it's o.k. doesn't mean God says it's o.k.)
12. Hatred, Racism
13. The Biblical account of Creation

2. Which brings up the second reason we fail to apply the principles of not bowing down. The fact is many Christians don't have a clear **UNDERSTANDING** of what God wants us to stand for.

A blonde went to a flight school insisting she wanted to learn to fly.

As all the planes were currently in use, the owner agreed to instruct her by radio on how to pilot the solo helicopter.

He took her out, showed her how to start it and gave her the basics, and sent her on her way. After she climbed 1000 feet, she radioed in. "I'm doing great! I love it! The view is so beautiful, and I'm starting to get the hang of this."

After 2000 feet, she radioed again, saying how easy it was to fly. The instructor watched her climb over 3000 feet, and was beginning to worry that she hadn't radioed in.

A few minutes later, he watched in horror as she crashed about half a mile away.

He ran over and pulled her from the wreckage. When he asked what happened, she said, "I don't know! Everything was going fine, but as I got higher, I was starting to get cold. I can barely remember anything after I turned off the big fan!"

- a. In order to not bow down we must first understand the principles of God's Word. What does he say is right and wrong. What are the truths that He wants us to live by.
- b. But... many people are biblically illiterate

- c. Opinions in the church have changed over time weakening many of the stances that we used to be sure of
- d. I want to encourage you to learn the scriptures,

2 Timothy 2:15 Modern English Version (MEV)

15 Study to show yourself approved by God, a workman who need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Romans 12:1-2 New International Version (NIV)

A Living Sacrifice

12 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. **2** Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

- 3. The third reason we end up bowing down when we should be taking a stand - like the 3 Hebrew children - is the fact that it is **HARD**

What Daniel 3 Teaches Us

- 1. Don't Bow Down... No matter how BIG the ISSUES may seem
- 2. Don't Bow Down... No matter how POWERFUL the VOICES may be
- 3. Don't Bow Down... No matter how LOUD the NOISES may be
- 4. Don't Bow Down... No matter how VAST the MAJORITY may be
 - a. Remember, the majority can be wrong
- 5. Don't Bow Down... No matter how HARSH the CONSEQUENCES can be

Revelation 12:11 New International Version (NIV)

11 They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.

6. Don't Bow Down... No matter how BEAUTIFUL the IMAGE may seem

- a. Beauty doesn't make it right.
 - i. Bathsheba was beautiful but that didn't make what David did beautiful.
 - ii. But they look so cute together.
 - iii. Or isn't it beautiful how much they love each other.
 - iv. Basically this is the "how could it be wrong if it feels so right" argument

7. Don't Bow Down... No matter how CERTAIN DELIVERANCE may seem

- a. Hebrews 11 reminds us that there have been many who died in their faith still waiting for what had been promised. So, too, we may have to stand strong not seeing the physical deliverance in this life, but being assured that God is still God and that our eternal reward is secure.