

Daniel #5

February 4, 2024

Series Title: Daniel's Visions Of the Ages

Today's Message: Righteous Defiance: The Value of Strong Convictions; Daniel 3:1-18

Before we look at Daniel 3, I want to hover over Daniel 2:17-23 for a moment.

Daniel and his three friends are slated to be executed if Nebuchadnezzar's dream is not revealed by the morning. After asking the king for more time Daniel returns home immediately and informs the three friends of the dire consequences awaiting them if the king's demand is not satisfied. What happens next is inspiring and serves as a model for how we should, at times, gather our friends to pray with us over serious matters.

Daniel urged them to plead with the God of heaven that Nebuchadnezzar's fury be turned away from them, and their lives would be spared, along with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. The saving of their lives hinged on whether the dream would be revealed and explained to Nebuchadnezzar. And, in the night God gave Daniel a vision revealing the dream and its meaning.

I hope you are stirred in your spirit as you read this story and think about it. I hope you are stirred up enough to pray fervently about things that are great and mysterious. For Daniel and his friends, they were stirred to pray fervently for "the God of heaven" (that is the Sovereign God) to show them mercy by revealing the mystery, so that they could live. The dream could not be known by man alone; the king's wrath would not be satisfied in any other way except that God would reveal the mystery and Daniel communicate that mystery to the king.

Like them, we believe in the Sovereignty of God. And while they believed in the Sovereignty of God, and that God is in heaven and does whatever pleases Him, they prayed. They prayed fervently. They prayed specifically. And I think they prayed for God's glory to be revealed as is evidenced by the prayer of praise in 2:20-23!

1. The Bible teaches the Sovereignty of God, but it also teaches us to pray fervently and frequently about all things. (Matthew 6:9-13; 7:7-11; Philippians 4:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:17)
 - a. "You have not because you ask not." (James 4:2)
 2. The Bible teaches us to pray for one another fervently. (James 5:16)
 3. The Bible teaches us to pray for our pastor elders, especially regarding preaching the word. (Eph. 6:19-20)
 4. The Bible teaches us to gather as a church praying focused prayers: praying for boldness and the evidence of the power of God through the ministry of the word. (Acts 4:23-31)
 5. Commit to praying and asking God for great things for His glory-- for His glory and our good! Pray boldly! Do you desire that the name of Jesus be glorified in the world? Do you desire that your life matter in the world in which you live? Pray boldly!
 - a. William Carey said, "Expect great things from God; Attempt Great things for God." I would add a line to preface his quote: "Ask great things from God; ..."
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Now, on to Daniel 3:1-18. We see righteous defiance as "The Three" refuse to obey the king's ungodly edict to bow down in worship before the statue/ idol/ image. This righteous defiance took commitment, courage, and trust. Where did this inner commitment, courage and trust originate?

If you tag on to the night of prayer in Daniel 2:17ff and connect it to these events in chapter 3 you can ascertain that prayer was a regular habit strengthening conviction, commitment, and the courage to act!

Let's do a simple outline of Daniel 3 and then develop the points just mentioned as we expound on the text. The outline is simple: 1) Nebuchadnezzar issues an absolute, powerful **decree** (3:1-7). And 2) The Three politely refuse to bow down and worship the idol in **defiance** of the king's command (3:8-18).

I) **(3:1-7) Decree: Nebuchadnezzar issues an absolute, powerful decree.**

- A) (3:1) The statue/ image/ idol of gold, in the likeness of Nebuchadnezzar.
 - 1) Situated on a prominent plain, for all to see and be in awe.
 - 2) I wonder if Nebuchadnezzar was charmed by the vision of himself as the head of gold.
 - (a) The idol originated in the imagination of Neb.
 - (b) An idol doesn't originate with the making of a statue. But rather an idol is forged in the heart.
 - (i) Of the heart of man John Calvin said, "The human heart is a perpetual idol factory."
 - 3) Of the statue/ image/ idol Nebuchadnezzar was pleased, and therefore in awe of himself.
- B) (3:2-3) Nebuchadnezzar commands all people to come and see and behold and worship.
 - 1) (3:2) Summoned: All the governing officials are summoned by command, including the three.
 - 2) (3:3) Presuming that the three were in attendance, we can assume that the *fires of testing* were warming, and options were being weighed and considered.
 - (a) With the fires of the crucible warming, the testing of their convictions was beginning.
 - (i) How polite must they be? Or, to stand out or to blend in? Or, to go along to get along?
 - (b) The fires of testing will soon become an inferno.
 - (i) Their convictions will reveal their commitment of fidelity to the God of heaven.
 - (a) God uses the fiery trials to test/ reveal the purity of our faith, our convictions, and our commitment to act courageously when the heat is on. (see 1 Peter 1:7)
 - 1. Strong convictions are most often forged in the fiery trials of life.
 - 2. Soon their convictions and commitment to God will be severely tested.
 - a. If they had known beforehand what was about to be demanded of them, I wonder if they would have run away. But they didn't know, and there they were in a real life, pressurized situation.
 - C) (3:4-6) The "herald" communicated the king's demand: All people will fall and worship!
 - 1) (3:4) A pre-figure or type of the False Prophet of **Revelation 13**?
 - (a) The herald calls out to all people of all nations and men of every language who gathered.
 - 2) (3:5) He demanded that at the sound of the instruments everyone fall down and worship.
 - (a) In Revelation 13:12, the False Prophet makes all people everywhere worship the beast.
 - 3) (3:6) He threatened death in a blazing furnace to anyone who refused to worship the image/ idol.
 - (a) In Revelation 13:15, the False Prophet had authority to cause all who refuse to be killed.
 - D) (3:7) At the sound of the instruments everyone immediately fell down and worshiped the image/ idol.
 - 1) Every knee bowed down to a false god designed in the heart of a wicked man.
 - (a) At the coming of the One True King, Jesus, every knee will bow and confess His Lordship!
 - 2) Not everyone bows, as we will see. There were at least three who stood out above the crowd!

II) **(3:8-18) Defiance: The Three politely refuse to bow down and worship the idol in defiance of the king's command.**

- A) (3:8) The true hearts of the worshipers revealed as they come forward to denounce the Jews.
 - 1) True heart revealed in that they came not to worship, but to attack and malign the three!
 - (a) *Denounce*: To eat up, devour; ravenous envy; malicious
 - (i) They came not full of awe but ate up with envy poured out bitterly toward the three.
 - (a) James 3:14 warns us as Christians not to "harbor bitter envy". It will eat you alive!

- (b) Galatians 5:15 warns us that if we bite and devour one another we will destroy each other.
- B) (3:9) They address Nebuchadnezzar as if he was a god: “O King, live forever.”
- C) (3:10-11) The astrologers come to inform Nebuchadnezzar of infractions against him.
- 1) How different from the God of heaven, who comes to His people.
 - (a) Among the Israelites He came informing and confronting His people through the prophets.
 - (b) Our Great God and Savior comes to us in the person of Jesus Christ, through the Spirit as the Word is preached, taught, read, and meditated on!
 - 2) And, while the astrologers accuse the three of sinning against Neb, the astrologer’s sin against God!
 - (a) Proverbs 15:26 warns, the thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord, but gracious words are pure.”
 - (i) Remember, their hearts were FULL of bitter envy welling up from an evil heart.
 - (ii) But as we will soon see, strong convictions are not expressed with malice or bitterness.
- D) (3:12) They may have ignored Nebuchadnezzar’s sinful demand, but they did not ignore God’s Word!
- 1) Leviticus 26:1: “You shall not make idols for yourselves or erect an image or pillar, and you shall not set up a figured stone in your land to bow down to it, for I am the Lord your God.”
 - (a) **The Word of God believed is the mother of good, righteous, and strong convictions!**
- E) (3:13-15) Nebuchadnezzar’s furious rage expressed toward the defiance of the three.
- 1) The king’s threat becomes a furnace of testing for the three.
 - 2) When tested: The heat of the test will reveal their true commitment to please God not man.
 - (a) When you are tempted your actions reveal the strength of your convictions and commitment to living to please God.
 - (i) What areas habitual failure to live up to your convictions do you need submit to God?
- F) (3:16-18) Condemned by Neb., the three commit the outcome to the Lord!
- 1) (3:16) Having a righteous fear of God produces a holy calm in the three to withstand the heat of threats of Nebuchadnezzar.
 - (a) The three politely refuse to cower before the furious rage of the king. “We do not to defend ourselves before you in this matter.” Why?
 - (i) Because Nebuchadnezzar knew of their convictions and their commitment to the God of gods (see Daniel 2:47).
 - 2) (3:17) The three men stand firm in their conviction.
 - (a) Standing on the conviction that “God is able” to save them.
 - (i) The NT equivalent: Jude :24, “To Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy—”
 - 3) (3:18) This deep conviction of God’s saving power **serves to buttress their commitment to remain faithful even if God chooses not to save them from the fire!**
 - (a) With strong commitment to fidelity to God, the three act **courageously!**
 - (i) “They loved not their lives unto death.” (Revelation 12:11b)
- G) Application: You must **establish biblical convictions**, which will **strengthen your commitment** to Christ, resulting courageous actions that cause you to **stand in the evil day!** (Ephesians 6:13)
- 1) **Principle:** The stronger your convictions the stronger your commitment. The stronger your commitment the greater your acts of courage to take your stand in the evil day!