

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

You Must be Born Again!

True repentance begins with knowledge of sin. The eyes of the repentant person are opened. He sees the length and breadth of God's holy law with distress and confusion. He sees the extent, the enormous extent, of his own transgressions. To his surprise, he discovers that he has been under a huge delusion by thinking of himself as a good person with a good heart. He learns that in reality he is wicked, guilty, corrupt, and evil in God's sight. His pride breaks down. His high thoughts melt away. He sees that he is a great sinner. This is the first step in true repentance.

Ryle, J. C.. Repentance - What it Means to Repent and Why We Must Do So (pp. 3-5). Aneko Press. Kindle Edition.

www.sermonaudio.com/crc

www.unholycharade.com (blog)

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With Us in the Fire – Nebuchadnezzar's Image

December 1st, 2024

Sermon Text: Daniel 3

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 44:6-20

This chapter virtually preaches itself, does it not? Here once more we see the evil corruption of man which craves worship for self and a refusal to acknowledge the living and true God. It is the heart of sin, to pursue the Serpent's lie – *you shall be like God*. All of the evil and corruption we see around us, all of the wicked workings which have so characterized our nation's governing authorities these past 4

years, all is motivated by this one thing – the lust to be a god, to be bowed down to, to be a law to oneself. We all need to pray regularly now for President Trump – that he will never succumb to the devil’s whisperings to do anything in the spirit of that evil pride which we see Nebuchadnezzar doing here. And WE must always be on guard against it ourselves. Pride. The lust for self-glory.

You will recall that last time in chapter 2, the king had a dream. In it he saw an image and Daniel was enabled by the Lord to tell it and interpret it-

"You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome. "The head of that statue *was made* of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. "You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands,

and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. (Dan 2:31-35)

It was a vision of human history in advance. The succession of world empires of which Babylon was the first (the head of gold), down through Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome until the Kingdom of God will one day come crashing down upon all the kingdoms of this world and be established forever. They will be no more, but His kingdom shall be forever.

Now, it appeared to us that at the end of chapter 2, after Daniel had interpreted his dream, the King surely had been humbled:

Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and did homage to Daniel,

and gave orders to present to him an offering and fragrant incense. The king answered Daniel and said, "Surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery." (Dan 2:46-47)

But as we are about to see, his lesson was short-lived and only partial. He still did not get it – that God is the only God, the living and true God, and that all other gods are the imaginations of man. And soon he was once again consumed with pride. Follow along as we read about it:

Dan 3:1-6 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, the height of which *was* sixty cubits *and* its width six cubits; he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. (2) Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent *word* to assemble the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that

Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. (3) Then the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces were assembled for the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. (4) Then the herald loudly proclaimed: "To you the command is given, O peoples, nations and *men of every* language, (5) that at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up. (6) "But whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire."

Nebuchadnezzar's thinking is quite apparent when we consider the context of the previous chapter. God had revealed to him that he, Nebuchadnezzar, was the head of gold, but that his kingdom was not

forever. The day would come when he and his kingdom would be replaced by another. In defiance of this, and really in defiance of God's own kingdom, he sets up this giant image of himself, which was gold from head to toe. It was a declaration that his kingdom alone would persist.

Dan 3:1 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, the height of which *was* sixty cubits *and* its width six cubits; he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.

The plain of Dura no doubt was a very flat area and this 90 foot tall, 9 foot wide statue would have been visible for a long distance. It was all for his own glory and he gave the order to all his officials:

Dan 3:4-5 Then the herald loudly proclaimed: "To you the command is given, O peoples, nations and *men of every* language, (5) that at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, you are to fall down and

worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up.

Here are Edward Young's insights –

"It was a common practice of the Assyrian kings to erect images of themselves with laudatory inscriptions in conquered cities or provinces, as symbols of their dominion. The usual expression in such cases being, 'A great image of royalty I made.'

When Daniel called the king the 'head of gold,' the king became puffed up with pride and decided to erect a golden image. Thus the image represented the deified Nebuchadnezzar." [Young, Geneva Commentary, Daniel]

The command is, of course, accompanied by a threat for anyone who refuses –

Dan 3:6 "But whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire."

Now of course all of this at best is “pseudo-worship.” True worship of the true God can only emanate from a heart that truly loves Him – not from a threat. But Nebuchadnezzar is a typical tyrant who demands total allegiance to the state. You see the same thing the early Christians faced in the Roman Empire. And it is the same issue Christians today are faced with –

Exo 20:3-6 "You shall have no other gods before Me. (4) "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. (5) "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, (6) but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

The response of the masses is as expected:

Dan 3:7 Therefore at that time, when all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language fell down *and* worshiped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

No doubt out of jealousy due to Daniel’s 3 friends holding high office, even though they were Jews, these “Chaldeans” evidence the same wicked spirit we will see in the account of Daniel in the lions’ den. Notice their flattering approach to the king-

Dan 3:8-12 For this reason at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and brought charges against the Jews. (9) They responded and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king: "O king, live forever! (10) "You, O king, have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe and all kinds of music, is to fall down and worship the golden image. (11) "But whoever

does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire. (12) "There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon, *namely* Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. These men, O king, have disregarded you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up."

Tyrants, in the end, are fools. The pride of man inevitably makes him a fool. These 3 Jews were a great asset to Nebuchadnezzar. They excelled in wisdom and ability – that is the reason they were appointed to office – “*whom you have appointed...*”. No doubt these wicked men had chafed from the first day the 3 had been appointed to office and resolved to watch for an opportunity to destroy them.

Dan 3:13-15 Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and anger gave orders to bring Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego; then these men were brought before the king. (14) Nebuchadnezzar

responded and said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? (15) "Now if you are ready, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery and bagpipe and all kinds of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, *very well*. But if you do not worship, you will immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire; and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?"

This is the moment of decision which every professing Christian will face. We face it today. YOU face it today. Following Christ will and always will, be costly.

Luk 9:23-26 And He was saying to *them* all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. (24) "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. (25) "For what is a man

profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? (26) "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and *the glory* of the Father and of the holy angels.

2Ti 3:12 Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

1Pe 4:12-14 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; (13) but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. (14) If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

Nothing is any different today. All Christians are being ordered in many different ways to bow down to the image...or else.

- Bow down and accept so-called “trans-sexuals” onto your team, or else you cannot be on the team. And you can just forget about getting a scholarship.
- Bow down and embrace the evolutionary basis of science, or else you can forget about a career in any scientific field. You will be kicked out of the university.
- Bow down and worship by accepting the ecumenical spirit in your church’s denomination, or your will be expelled from it.
- Bow down and accept all perversions of human sexuality, or you will lose your job.
- Wear the pride colors on your sports team uniform...or else.

Nebuchadnezzar’s golden image is still with us today as it always has been, along with the accompanying threats of the fiery furnace.

What would you do? What WILL you do? “Come on, you 3 young men, don’t cause trouble for us or

for yourselves. Just bend your knee. It's a little thing. Just burn a little incense to Caesar. Why bring all this upon yourself – don't be a troublemaker." NOTE: YOU, the Christian, will always be the one to be blamed for the whole affair. YOU are the problem. Everyone else is conforming except you. YOU have enraged the king.

So, here is the coach of your team. Or the principal of the school. Or the head of human resources where you work. Or the leader of your church denomination. You are hauled into their office. You're in trouble with them. You are being stubborn and uncooperative. YOU are the problem, and you had better straighten yourself out...or else.

But these enemies of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego *knew very well that these 3 young men would never bow to the King's image. Why? Because they had seen their faithfulness in serving their God.*

But if you do not worship, you will immediately be cast into the midst

of a furnace of blazing fire; and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?"

There is the image. The crowd and the King are waiting. There is the blazing furnace. What will they do? What will YOU do? Because that image and that furnace are right in front of all of us today, right now. What will YOU do?

Here is what these three did:

Dan 3:16-18 Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. (17) "If it be *so*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. (18) "But *even if He does not*, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

There it is. This *holy defiance*. "Throw me off the team, cancel my scholarship, prohibit me from

pursuing my chosen career, fire me from my job, throw me out of your church, do what you will, I am not going to conform and bow down to your false god.”

What was the source of their confidence and their holy defiance? God! He was the One in whom they trusted. They knew Him. They knew that He insists upon our full obedience and loyalty – above all else. They knew that even Nebuchadnezzar was under His rule. They knew that He was going to bless their obedience and that He was fully capable of rescuing them from that fire...*but even if He chose not to, even that would be for His glory and for their good.*

Notice this part of their reply very carefully –

“we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter.”

What did they mean? *They meant that the King had overstepped his bounds and that his command to bow down to the image was a command which he had no*

authority to issue. They are confronting the king with this very subject – the separation of church and state. The state has no authority except that which is given them by God. The state has no authority to bind men’s conscience. Your employer at work has no authority to demand that you put that “pride” emblem on your desk. Your school authorities have no right to require you to agree that gender perversions are acceptable.

Understand? Nebuchadnezzar had overstepped the bounds God had drawn. And thus these three faithful men could not be required to bow down, or even to give an answer to the king. They were in essence saying, “go ahead and dismiss me from my job, throw me off of the team, expel me from the university, shun me from the family...I am not going to bow down to your god.”

Clearly, the Lord is putting these very questions to each YOU today. Right now.

Dan 3:19-21 Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with wrath, and his facial expression was altered toward Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. He answered by giving orders to heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. (20) He commanded certain valiant warriors who *were* in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego in order to cast *them* into the furnace of blazing fire. (21) Then these men were tied up in their trousers, their coats, their caps and their *other* clothes, and were cast into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire.

The king was filled with wrath. His face evidenced this terrible rage. This is all, of course, fueled by Satan. This kind of thing is always of the devil. He is the one who is really behind it. If you are really a Christian, if you really have been born again and belong to Christ, *the devil hates you furiously and he wants to destroy you. His threats are designed to make you deny Christ and bow down to the image.*

So be prepared. *Just because your refusal to conform results in that coach or principal or employer being very angry with you, does not mean you have done something wrong!* Satan's servants raged at Jesus!

Consider the position they were in.

- They were young
- They were captives in a foreign land far from home
- They stood before the absolute monarch of the world
- They had no powerful friends to support them
- There is a horrid manner of death right in front of them

This is when faith as a gift from the Lord goes into action. Our trust is in the Lord and in His promises. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego no doubt knew this Scripture:

Isa 43:1-2 But now, thus says the LORD, your Creator, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine! (2) "When you pass

through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, Nor will the flame burn you.

And so, Nebuchadnezzar once again is going to be humbled before the true and living God:

Dan 3:21-25 Then these men were tied up in their trousers, their coats, their caps and their *other* clothes, and were cast into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire. (22) For this reason, because the king's command *was* urgent and the furnace had been made extremely hot, the flame of the fire slew those men who carried up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.

(23) But these three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, fell into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire *still* tied up.

(24) Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up in haste; he said to his high officials, "Was it not three men we cast

bound into the midst of the fire?" They replied to the king, "Certainly, O king." (25) He said, "Look! I see four men loosed *and* walking *about* in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of *the* gods!"

Not only were the 3 *untied* and walking around in a furnace so hot that the soldiers who threw them in were torched, *but now there was a fourth Person in the flames!*

This furnace must have been quite large and designed so that you could see into it from the main opening. It was big enough that the 4 could walk around in it, all the time visible to those outside.

Who was this 4th Person? There is no doubt that it was the pre-incarnate Son of God. There was something divine about His appearance – "*like a son of the gods.*" And it was He who was protecting these young men from the flame.

Now, listen very, very carefully. When YOU stand for Christ, when you refuse to conform to the world, *you will not be alone!* This is the Lord's absolute promise to His people:

Psa 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

Act 18:9-10 And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid *any longer*, but go on speaking and do not be silent; (10) for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city."

Nebuchadnezzar calls out to them:

Dan 3:26-27 Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the furnace of blazing fire; he responded and said, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, come out, you servants of the Most High God, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-

nego came out of the midst of the fire. (27) The satraps, the prefects, the governors and the king's high officials gathered around *and* saw in regard to these men that the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men nor was the hair of their head singed, nor were their trousers damaged, nor had the smell of fire *even* come upon them.

It is interesting that the king now calls them "servants of the Most High God." All the king's officials saw it and gathered around. The 3 were not burned, not even a singed hair. Their clothes were not damaged and didn't even smell of smoke!

Dan 3:28-30 Nebuchadnezzar responded and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants who put their trust in Him, violating the king's command, and yielded up their bodies so as not to serve or worship any god except their own God. (29) "Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation or tongue that speaks anything

offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses reduced to a rubbish heap, inasmuch as there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way." (30) Then the king caused Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego to prosper in the province of Babylon.

and conform to it, or will we stand for Christ no matter the cost, and entrust ourselves to Him? One way is Broadway that leads to the real furnace that never ceases to burn. The other way leads to life eternal.

God was glorified. The enemy was silenced. And God blessed His faithful servants.

Heb 11:32-34 And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, (33) who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed *acts of* righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, (34) quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

This is the choice put before each one of us this very day. Will we bow down to the gods of this world