

Life Group Notes

Sunday 24th October 2021

Speaker: Scott Taylor

Title: Daniel: Taking a Stand

Passage: Daniel 3

We continued our series in Daniel looking at what it looks like to live in exile by looking at the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace.

King Nebuchadnezzar has erected a golden image which is ridiculously tall. He has placed it on the plain of Dura so it is obvious to everyone, everyone can see it. He advertises its presence by inviting all the prominent people to come to its dedication and there is an expectation that everyone will bow before it when any music plays.

This image is an obvious idol. Set up to mark the fact that his kingdom is the ultimate kingdom that will not be diminished nor defeated. It's a play of power.

This can help us see how idols operate even today: Idols are often obvious, attractive, dressed up to catch our eye; idols are well advertised; there is often a lot of noise around idols, be that music; they cause us to bow down – often we do not contest the bowing, sometimes we bow in fear; idols are rarely things that we are forced to bow to, but those days are coming and maybe even here; exert control over us, they hold an authority; cause fear – either of not doing it or losing it or not being seen to do it; make us willing to compromise, maybe even to drop everything.

So, everyone goes and they bow to the idol, the gold image, except for three. The three get noticed and some people go and let the king know. He is livid and calls for them. Because they have taken a stand, they now face the very real punishment of going in the fiery furnace. But they do not back down. They actually say to the king that they would rather die in the furnace, if God doesn't come through for them and save them, than bow to his gods or to the idol.

At this he rages further and says the furnace should be as hot as it can be. It's so hot it actually kills the guards who are throwing the guys into the furnace.

When we take a stand we too will face fiery furnaces: ridicule; isolation; lack of career development, maybe even losing jobs; slander; FOMO; kids picked on or bullied; prison.

These things are deeply uncomfortable and things we want to steer clear of, right?

But the story takes its turn here. This is where we see God at work, in the furnace. The king notices there are now four unbound people in the furnace, and he recognises one of them as a son of the gods. It is the preincarnate Jesus, walking with the men freeing them in the midst of the flames. **What can the world throw at us, once we have faced the fear, that Jesus cannot free us from.**

The men come out untainted by the flames, not even smelling of fire! And the king declares of our God "... for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way." Hallelujah!

Questions:

1. What did you hear on Sunday that you found challenging, helpful or provocative?
2. What are some of the cultural idols that you can think of as a group?
3. When have you taken a stand due to what you believe the bible to say and what furnace did you face? How did you get through it?
4. How does Jesus model this for us?
5. Pray that we would have the confidence in God and courage to take a stand according to his word