

## DANIEL 3:13-28

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**God is with us.** That's what I'd like to consider with you today. We worship the God who is with us. He is present. He is beside us. He is near. Let's go to God's word and see this truth together this morning. **[Read Daniel 3:13-28.]**

### INTRODUCTION

- Is there someone in your life whose faith really inspires you?
  - Maybe someone from when you were young – youth group or YoungLife leader.
  - Maybe a peer – kid in class who's not afraid to stand out/coworker you admire.
  - Maybe your parents/grandparents – someone a little older/mature.
- Who is it for you? (Think about it and swap answers with friends/family over lunch.)

**Transition:** Passage today introduces us to three friends whose faith can inspire us all.

### CONTEXT

**State:** Story unfolds in Babylon – located in present-day Iraq.

- World power of day – had fascinating approach to world domination.
  - Use military force to conquer a people.
  - Take best/brightest of newly conquered land and ship them back to Babylon.
    - Didn't abuse as slaves but educated/married into Babylonian families.
    - Within generation they'd be fully integrated into Babylonian culture.
- Brilliant strategy – but it doesn't seem to be working with 3 stubborn Israelites.
  - Arrive on scene, Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, erected enormous gold statue: 90 feet high, 9 feet wide.
  - Surrounded it with a worship team: Horns, pipes, harps. (And... **V15: bagpipes!**)
  - Here's how it works:
    - Whenever band strikes up you must fall on face and worship image.
    - If you don't, immediately cast into flames.
- Everyone's **playing along** – apart from our 3 friends.
  - When music plays, they refuse to fall down.
  - Sends Nebuchadnezzar into **furious rage (VV13-15)**:
    - *I'm King of the World – when I say fall on your face you fall on your face.*
    - *Last chance – bow at the music or burn in the flames!*
- But look what our friends say – to the **king** – in **V16: O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter.**
  - *You may be king of world, but we don't feel need to take your call.*
  - *We follow the true King... Think we're going to defy him to please you?*
- At this, the king loses his mind (**VV19-23**):
  - Turbo charges furnace and sends them to their cremation.
  - But even as marched toward flames – our friends remain unmoved.
- We can't help but wonder: Do I have faith like that? Would I give my life?

**It's inspiring stuff!**

**Transition:** But it's not just here in Bible... Xns throughout history had inspiring faith too.

- Ever heard of **Hein Sietsma**?
- I heard his story in a Ray Cortese sermon that really shaped my approach to this text, and then I tracked down a fuller version in a *Christianity Today* article from 2015. I've put links to both sources in my notes which are posted on our website every week.<sup>1</sup>

**Illustrate:** In 1940, Nazis invaded Netherlands...

- Much of population adopted posture of compliance – But Hein Sietsma wasn't on board.
  - He was engaged to be married to love of his life, Diet Eman.
  - Two of them became involved in an underground resistance to protect Jews.
    - Hid these image-bearers in attics/secret rooms.
    - Found ways to feed them and keep them alive.
  - But, alas, our young couple were discovered by the Nazis.
    - Diet sent to prison.
    - Hein sent to a concentration camp – where he would die.
  - But on the transport train – on his way to a literal furnace – penned letter to his fiancée on piece of toilet paper.
    - Wrapped it in brown paper, addressed it, flung out window.
    - Amazingly – miraculously – someone picked it up and put it in the mail.
  - By time Diet received letter, Hein was already dead.
    - Can imagine how her fingers trembled as she unwrapped crumpled paper/read his last words.
    - *Darling, don't count on our seeing each other again soon... Here we see again that we do not decide our own lives. Even if we won't see each other again on earth, we will never be sorry for what we did, that we took this stand. And know, that of every last human being in this world, I loved you most.*
- Nazi music played but Hein Sietsma would not bow. **It's inspiring stuff.**

**Transition:** We see it in the Bible, we see it in church history – and we need it today...

**Apply:** We need this kind of faith...

- To navigate ups/downs of life and follow Jesus no matter what...
- To hold fast to biblical truth when our culture says we're bigots or worse...
- To hear the music – of own fears/doubts OR cultural pressure that's all around – and refuse to fall.

**Transition:** But where do we get that kind of faith? Notice with me, two things in our text.

## **CONTENT**

**FIRST: You need faith IN God.**

- Sounds obvious – but take closer look at **VV17-18**: Nuanced understanding of faith.
  - **V17:** [If you throw us in the fire], our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king.
    - You are A king, but you are not THE King.
    - Our God can save us – and we think he will!

- **V18: BUT IF NOT, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.**
  - Even if God doesn't save us – we still trust him!
  - Our faith not in a particular outcome but IN God – we're sticking with him no matter what.

**Illustrate:** You see the difference? It makes all the difference in the world...

- They didn't put their faith in a particular outcome.
- They put their faith IN God and trusted him with any outcome – even death.

**Apply:** Something/someone in your life that you need to trust to God like that?

- Don't miss sense in which this kind of faith – faith IN God – requires little from us:
  - Don't need a lot of faith – just need mustard seed in the right thing.
  - Isn't that good news?!?!
    - Those who inspire don't have superhuman faith...
    - They have a superhuman God.
- We can all be Xns today:
  - Your failures/foibles, weaknesses/doubts, shame/inadequacies NOT what counts.
  - What matters is NOT how much faith you have – But that you have faith IN God.

**Transition:** You need faith IN God... And second...

**SECOND: You need faith IN the God – Who is WITH us → God is with us.**

- Back to the text... Unsure of what outcome will be – our friends are thrown in furnace.
- But then King Nebuchadnezzar's fury turns to shock.
  - Furnace so hot that it kills mighty men who marched our friends to flames.
    - But these Israelites are still walking around.
    - Won't worship image → Won't obey commands → Now won't even die!
  - But something else is yet more shocking still:
    - Staring intently into flames the king leaps to his feet and exclaims, **V24: Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?**
    - Bewildered he continues, **V25: But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods.**
- God has appeared in midst of flames → Burning brighter than them all...
  - He has brought his presence to them...
  - Hasn't kept them *from* the furnace – but he has joined them *in* the furnace.
- He is in control → He is saving and keeping them → And he is with them.

**Illustrate:** Wouldn't that be something... To have God join you like that?

- Remember Diet Eman?
  - Languishing in Nazi prison cell – filthy sanitation, food in short supply, cold days/colder nights, fearing for her fiancé and 1M other things...
  - She took a hair pin and vandalized the prison wall...
    - Graffiti in the name of Jesus!
    - *Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age...*

- Aware of his presence in her present...
  - She had security, comfort, hope...
  - And she determined to persevere no matter what...
- And persevere she did:
  - Survived the war and lived a full life.
  - Died just 4 years ago → She was 99 years old.
- And for all those years, Jesus was with her...

**Apply:** At Christmas, we have this gospel.

- **The bad news:** We have broken commands of the true King.
  - Deserve to be cast into the furnace...
  - Not temporary fires of Babylon but eternal flames of hell.
- **But the good news:** Jesus entered the furnace for us.
  - Only this time no one stepped in → On the cross he was unutterably alone.
  - But then... he rose again from the dead and promised to be with us.
    - *Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age...*
    - Having conquered ultimate furnace – he brings his presence into ours.
  - Whatever furnace you find yourself in today – Jesus is there with you.

### CONSEQUENCE

- It's this kind of faith – faith IN the God who is WITH us – that will change your life.
  - Changed Shadrach/Meshach/Abednego...
  - Changed Hein/Diet...
  - Changed person you thought about at start of service...
  - And it can change you too.
- Ever thought about fact that your faith could inspire others?
  - That when they think of those who've inspired them, they could think of you?
  - Someone in your life who needs that?
    - Classmates/coworkers/friends/kids/grandkids?
    - Maybe over lunch you can share about those who've inspired you AND who you'd love to be an inspiration to...
- Then live that life by faith in the God who is with us.

## RESOURCES AND ENDNOTES

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### Resources

This list contains some of the resources that were used to prepare this sermon series. Check them out if you want to dig a little deeper.

- Ray Cortese, *Furnace Faith*.
- Dale Ralph Davis, *The God of the Bush*.
- Dale Ralph Davis, *Pilgrim Provisions*.
- John L. MacKay, *Exodus*.

### Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> See Ray Cortese, *Furnace Faith*, accessed [here](#) 12/14/23; and [this](#) *Christianity Today* article, “Meet the Dutch Christians Who Saved Their Jewish Neighbors from the Nazis,” accessed 12/14/23.