

A Call to Worship_Daniel 3

Scripture: Daniel 3 NIV; 1 Peter 1:6-9 NIV; Romans 12:1-2 NIV

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I can remember going to a Penn State football game several years ago. Now, I've been to a few other big sporting events (Bills games) but I was pretty young and didn't perceive the experience the same way that I did this time.

As we made our way through the field parking lot and did our little tailgating thing, it was cool...kinda normal...

But then we began our way to the stadium and as we got onto the campus I can remember very vividly thinking to myself...this is worship. I wasn't saying it with condemnation, but it was a simple observation.

The level of devotion, time, money, and energy given by people was truly impressive. It was evident that people were willing to sacrifice - in some cases their dignity - but noticeably, their passion, to help promote and cheer on an atmosphere of celebration and spirit.

So in a very real sense, it was worship.

Everyone worships someone or something. Even people who claim to have no faith or alignment with a religious system.

People worship political parties, sports teams, celebrities of any kind, the outdoors and creation, possessions, themselves and their bodies, family, and so on...

Essentially, whatever you give great honor to (offering your time, energy, and financial commitment to) that is what you worship.

Now I want to ask you a question: These fans, in their worship; were they cheering for all the teams playing on the field that day? No way! They were cheering for Nittany Nation. It was obvious.

Not only does worship cost us something, but it is also intolerant. Worship is about honoring that which is being worshipped above all the other options available.

That leads me to today: because each of you listening right now, you are a worshipper. And many of you would say that you are worshippers of Jesus Christ God's only Son.

What I want to do today is this: I want to try and provoke you a little bit. I want to be like a poker stick used to stir the coals of a fire and ignite a response of faith.

Before we continue I want to ask you:
What do you find yourself worshipping other than Jesus?
Be honest. There's no point in lying.

If you worship money - just say so.
If you worship other people's opinions - just say so.
If you worship your children - just say so.
If you worship comfort and convenience - just say so.

You get my point.

Now let me ask you - with any of those things you just mentioned - would you say that they are worth your time? Yes or No?

Next question - do you find that your overall well-being rises and falls based on how well the person or thing you worship responds to your worship?

Like, when your investments rise because you have put a lot of time and effort into monitoring and adjusting them you feel great; but when they fail you start to panic.

OR when your children obey you and love you and make you proud you are on top of the world and life couldn't be better, but when they are disobedient and despise you and you aren't as proud you feel like the world is caving in.

Hang with me - I'm going somewhere.

You see, who or what you worship will reveal the substance of your faith. In other words, when you place your worship upon something or someone, you discover rather quickly the level to which you can depend on them.

And that leads me to where we pick up with the book of Daniel. We are in this series titled Thriving in Babylon and it is a series designed to help us excel in Kingdom of God living while we reside in another kingdom that is in opposition to the Kingdom of God.

Today we are in Daniel chapter 3 and this is a chapter that is SOOO famous. If you haven't been to church since you were a kid, this is likely one of those stories that you were taught and that you remember.

Daniel 3 is the account of when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were thrown into a fiery furnace for failure to worship the image of King Nebuchadnezzar...and they were not burned.

So what is this chapter all about it?

It's about the call to worship.

Listen, you will be called upon to worship someone or something in this life.
In fact, you already are worshipping.

But the question is this: Is the object of your worship able to save you? Is the object of your worship trustworthy?

Daniel 3 -

6 Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.

What we are seeing from king Nebuchadnezzar is a demand to worship him and his statute by the threat of death.

This may not seem all that relevant to you, as at least to my knowledge, none of you have faced death for not bowing down to worship a political power structure.

But on the other hand, there is a pressure to do what I will call **BLENDED WORSHIP**.

If we could use a mathematical formula it would look like this:

God + _____ (someone or something) = all that I need.

In our world, it is very hard to avoid this, but it is not impossible.

So a lot of times Christians will do something like this.

Jesus / God + my version of politics = everything I need.

Jesus / God + good circumstances = everything I need.

Jesus / God + money = everything that I need.

Jesus / God + people who like me = everything that I need.

Jesus / God + sexual gratification = everything that I need.

Jesus / God + my opinions = everything that I need.

You see the invitation is not so much to abandon worship of Jesus, it's to merge worship of Jesus with worship of other lesser gods.

This is dangerous though.

Why?

Because it seems harmless.

It seems harmless to mix and match your worship and create your own worship smoothie with all your favorite things.

But after a while, it gets confusing. Eventually it becomes sort of complex.

You know, like you know Jesus calls you to keep sex pure within the covenant of marriage, but you've already crossed that line and are doing married things with someone you aren't married to...and you want to worship Jesus, but you're also blending it with your own twist. Eventually you aren't sure who you're worshipping anymore.

You know that to be devoted to Jesus you are invited into a life of risk, but because you're most focused on your own comfort, you try to ignore those teachings of Jesus...but then you get to the point where you aren't sure when you're following him and when you're following yourself...it gets confusing.

You know that Jesus teaches on the importance and role of tithing 10% of your income - returning it to him through the church as an act of worship - but you also have this problem...you would rather keep that 10% for yourself to spend on what you want rather than give it what God wants...and eventually it gets confusing because you really aren't sure who is God in your life - you, God, your money, or your stuff.

Do you see how blended worship can create problems?

Let's get back to Daniel 3...

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.”

So these astrologers were essentially spies. Whatever their motives were, they were little tattle tales and reported that some of the Jews were refusing to worship the gods of Babylon - particularly the statue of the king.

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?"

Did you catch the arrogance of the king?

In other words he is mocking the God of the Jews because - let's be honest - in his mind he has every reason to do so. He just ransacked Jerusalem and wiped out their temple...if the God of the Jews was going to stop him, it seems that would have been the time to do it.

So King Nebuchadnezzar is feeling pretty good about things when he threatens these 3 Jewish boys.

But we see next is incredibly significant. It is an apocalypse - a revelation of - the result of their worship. Who they worship, apparently, has given them reason not simply to be rebellious, but to be devoted only to worshipping him...the one true God.

Whatever their reason for this level of faith, their response is epic...

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."

Just stop and consider that for a moment.

In the face of a torturous death they refuse to commit spiritual adultery - they maintain their fidelity and even defy 'name it and claim theology' because they give God an out..."even if he doesn't" we refuse to worship.

So a lot of times we Western cultures like to take that and make it into this big bowed up chest puffing moment and we leave our church gatherings ready to defy culture and the government and tell them 'what for' with a smirk of arrogance.

But let's slow down a minute and consider how they got to where they were in their faith.

They were confident in who?

God. Not themselves.

Why?

Because through their worship they discovered how worthy and amazing and loving and compassionate he truly is. They discovered that as they sacrificed their comfort, position, and reputation to worship God, he gave them deep courage and bold faith.

In other words, **SLIDE: who they were placing their faith upon was sufficient to stake their lives upon.** They didn't need anything else.

So to use a similar illustration as I did earlier:

God + nothing = everything.

Now there's more to this story. It gets kinda crazy...maybe even far fetched. But there's evidence that supports all of what we read here being valid.

As a result of their unwillingness to live with Blended Faith they are thrown into the 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.

But something supernatural was happening in their midst. Something that can't be explained through science...

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." v. 28 *an angel*.

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.

These men, listen, were not delivered from the fire. They were delivered in the midst of it.

For them, the fire was what validated their faith in God and it resulted in greater worship and honor of God.

But what about you?

Is your faith fireproof?

For some of you, the reason your faith is weak is because you haven't invested into it in such a way that it cost you something.

These young men knew the cost of staying devoted in worship to the one true God, not blending their worship with anything else, and trusting that no matter what the outcome their faithfulness brought upon them - God would be glorified through them.

Let me bring this closer to home.

Jesus' disciple named Peter writes this:

6 In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Listen, those 3 Jewish boys were thrown into a fiery tomb and came out unscathed because of the power and protection of God.

Jesus went into a tomb dead and three days later came out alive by the power of God.

In both instances, it was in the midst of the fiery ordeal that our faith is validated as being trustworthy.

It is in the midst of radical obedience that scares the tar out of you that you discover the strength of your faith.

It is the midst of trusting God when it doesn't make sense in the minds of people that you begin to see the mind of God as something worth knowing.

Today, Jesus is calling on me and you to live completely devoted to him.

Romans 12:1-2

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.