

Commitment

Living in a Foreign Land – Message 3
February 10, 2019

I. Introduction: Continuing our series called *Living in a Foreign Land*.

A. Today's message is entitled, *Commitment*.

1. **Theme verse:** Daniel 3:28 (NLT)—“...*They defied the king's command and were willing to die rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.*”
2. Daniel was *Living in a Foreign Land*, because he was captured by King Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers in Judah and taken to Babylon, where he lived in exile for 69 years.
3. Daniel remained faithful to God and influenced others toward God in a pagan (unbelieving, polytheistic) land.
4. Daniel's experience applies to us because we are *living in a foreign land*, exiled within a culture, where our Christian beliefs and moral standards are being ignored, criticized, ridiculed, or even attacked. (Rom.15:4)
5. Our responsibility is to exercise influence, like Daniel and his three friends, by rejecting compromise, refusing silence and instead, speaking biblical truth to lead others to God.
6. APP.: Are you committed to worship and obey God alone?

B. Background (Daniel 3:1-12; C/R: Exodus 20:3-5)

1. Daniel 3:1-6,8,12 (NLT)—¹ *King Nebuchadnezzar made a gold statue ninety feet tall and nine feet wide and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. ...*
⁴ *Then a herald shouted out, “People of all races and nations and languages, listen to the king's command!* ⁵ *When you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and other musical instruments, bow to the ground to worship King Nebuchadnezzar's gold statue.* ⁶ *Anyone who refuses to obey will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.” ...*
⁸ *But some of the astrologers went to the king and informed on the Jews. ...* ¹² *“But there are some Jews—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—whom you have put in charge of the province of Babylon. [Envy?] They pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They refuse to serve your gods and do not worship the gold statue you have set up.”*
2. Every Jew knew that the 1st and 2nd Commandments forbid worshiping idols. (Ex.20:3-5)
3. There is no doubt that these evil men were watching and waiting for the opportunity to accuse these Hebrew men who had been promoted above them and other Babylonians.
4. These astrologers had their lives spared through Daniel's efforts [2:24], but they were still interested in ending the influence of these Jews through death.
5. Never underestimate the anger of envy, the cruelty of jealousy. (Consider social media.)
6. How does this passage apply to us? We can be threatened when we refuse to worship the idols and ideas embraced by our culture!
7. *Worship* is offering reverent honor, respect, adoring devotion to any person or thing.
8. *Who* or *what* we worship will dominate our thoughts, dictate our schedule, and direct our spending, resulting in developing our character and determining our lives.
9. We will identify and define ourselves according to what we worship, which might be money, sports teams, hobbies, power, sex (preferences, practices, potential partners).
10. Many in our world essentially worship themselves—their own ideas and opinions, in fact, whatever furthers their self-interest!

11. Put simply, we become what we worship; our idols will be reflected in our lives!

II. Commitment to God includes... (Daniel 3:13-30)

A. #1 - Encountering persecution. (Daniel 3:13-15; C/R: John 15:19-20; 2 Timothy 3:12)

1. Daniel 3:13-15 (NLT)—¹³ Then Nebuchadnezzar flew into a rage and ordered that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought before him. When they were brought in, ¹⁴ Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you refuse to serve my gods or to worship the gold statue I have set up? ¹⁵ I will give you one more chance [because of service to him and his kingdom?] to bow down and worship the statue I have made when you hear the sound of the musical instruments. But if you refuse, you will be thrown immediately into the blazing furnace. And then what god will be able to rescue you from my power?” [Reasserted threat after giving 2nd chance.]
2. The king gave these Hebrew men a second chance to change their minds and save their lives, but, not wanting to appear merciful, reasserted his strength by ridiculing their God.
3. We are not threatened with being cast into a furnace for refusing to worship an idol, but remember, worship is not merely bowing before a statue, it may mean agreeing with and supporting an idea, behavior or practice that is accepted by our culture, such as abortion.
4. EX.: Several states, notably, New York, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Illinois, Vermont and New Mexico, are removing limitations on abortion—eliminating the idea that children are conceived as persons possessing the image of God. (Psalm 139:13-16)
5. If you disagree, you may be met with fiery stares or heated attacks.
6. If we don't support lifestyles opposed to God's guidelines, such as sexual immorality, but perhaps even unbridled materialism, we may be rejected by friends. (John 15:19-20)
7. You can live a hidden life of faith and avoid mistreatment, but a life that is distinctively godly will arouse anger from those who oppose God's guidelines. (2 Tim.3:12)

Commitment to God includes...

B. #2 - Expressing faith. (Daniel 3:16-18; C/R: Habakkuk 3:17-19; 1 Peter 3:14-17)

1. Daniel 3:16-18 (NLT)—¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. ¹⁷ If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. ¹⁸ But even if he doesn't, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up.”
2. Faith is trusting and obeying God regardless of feelings, circumstances, or consequences.
3. True faith is not abandoned by threats, because our commitment to God, sealed by our personal encounter with His Spirit, has changed us, so denying God would mean rejecting what we know by personal experience to be true!
4. These men did not attempt to defend their faith or their God!
5. They did not plead for mercy, but instead, reasonably, respectfully, calmly, said they would not bow to the king's statue or serve any of Babylon's gods! [Matt.10:28]
6. They used this threat as an opportunity to express their faith, asserting that their God could rescue them, but if He didn't, they would still trust Him. (Hab.3:17-18; 1Pet.3:14-17)
7. They might have rationalized, “We'll bow our bodies, but not our hearts to save our lives,” but loyalty to God requires us to stand publicly and humbly state what we believe.
8. Disagreement about faith and values with others may be opportunities to influence.

9. EX.: You may have friends or family members who don't follow God's standards; you don't need to defend yourself or God, just declare your faith and expect others to respect your faith and values in your household.
10. If we never communicate our convictions, we will not cause others to examine their lives.
11. APP.: Are we committed to trust, and speak for God, even in threatening situations, because your relationship with Him is based on truth, not favorable circumstances?

Commitment to God includes...

C. #3 - Enduring suffering. (Daniel 3:19-23; C/R: 2 Corinthians 4:9-10; 1 Peter 1:7; 4:12-13)

1. Daniel 3:19-23 (NLT)—¹⁹ *Nebuchadnezzar was so furious with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that his face became distorted with rage. [Proud people become cruel when disrespected!] He commanded that the furnace [smelting ore] be heated seven times hotter than usual. ²⁰ Then he ordered some of the strongest men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. ²¹ So they tied them up and threw them into the furnace, fully dressed in their pants, turbans, robes, and other garments. ²² And because the king, in his anger, had demanded such a hot fire in the furnace, the flames killed the soldiers as they threw the three men in. [Anger always damages innocent parties.] ²³ So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, securely tied, fell into the roaring flames.*
2. The king's narcissistic anger affected his reason so that he raised the temperature in the furnace, which killed the soldiers obeying his orders, when lowering the temperature would have actually intensified the Hebrew men's agony.
3. When we remain committed to God's Word and His ways, we will suffer. [2 Cor.4:9-10]
4. [Screen] 1 Peter 4:12-13 (NLT)—¹² *Dear friends, don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you. ¹³ Instead, be very glad—for these trials make you partners with Christ in his suffering, so that you will have the wonderful joy of seeing his glory when it is revealed to all the world. [1Pet.1:7]*
5. Suffering for our faith may vary from merely alienation to verbal attack.
6. God always rewards faith, but he doesn't always deliver us from affliction. [Rev.2:10]
7. Suffering refines our faith, strengthens our trust, enables us to identify with Jesus and be recognized by others as Christians.
8. APP.: Are you willing to suffer for Christ's sake?

Commitment to God includes...

D. #4 - Experiencing God's presence. (Daniel 3:24-27; C/R: Isaiah 43:2; Matthew 10:28; Hebrews 11:33-39; 13:5-6)

1. Daniel 3:24-25 (NLT)—²⁴ *But suddenly, Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in amazement and exclaimed to his advisers, "Didn't we tie up three men and throw them into the furnace?" "Yes, Your Majesty, we certainly did," they replied. ²⁵ "Look!" Nebuchadnezzar shouted. "I see four men, unbound, walking around in the fire unharmed! And the fourth looks like a god [Aramaic like a son of the gods]!"*
2. Some scholars think the 4th man was an angel, others believe it was Jesus Christ in one of His preincarnate appearances (Christophany), but in either case, God was present with these men in the furnace!
3. God's Spirit is always present with His people who are in pain!

4. Of course, God’s Spirit is always present within every true, born-again, believer, but when suffering, we are free of other distractions, focused on Him for support.
5. Daniel 3:26-27 (NLT)—²⁶ *Then Nebuchadnezzar came as close as he could to the door of the flaming furnace and shouted: “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!”*
So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stepped out of the fire. ²⁷ *Then the high officers, officials, governors, and advisers crowded around them and saw that the fire had not touched them. Not a hair on their heads was singed, and their clothing was not scorched. They didn’t even smell of smoke!*
6. The only thing the fire burned were the ropes that bound these men!
7. Suffering removes many of the things that bind us to this earth and focus us on eternity!
8. [Screen] Isaiah 43:2 (NLT)—*“When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you.”* [Heb.13:5-6]
9. APP.: Do you experience God’s Presence when you are in pain?

Result: Daniel 3:28-30

1. Daniel 3:28-30 (NLT)—²⁸ *Then Nebuchadnezzar said, “Praise to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent his angel to rescue his servants who trusted in him. They defied the king’s command and were willing to die rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.* ²⁹ *Therefore, I make this decree: If any people, whatever their race or nation or language, speak a word against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they will be torn limb from limb, and their houses will be turned into heaps of rubble. There is no other god who can rescue like this!”*
³⁰ *Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to even higher positions in the province of Babylon.*
2. The commitment of these men to God even when threatened, influenced the king to praise their God and forbid anyone speaking against Him! (But he’s not yet converted.)

- **Memory verse:** 2 Timothy 3:12 (NLT)—*Yes, and everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*
- **Counselors**