But If Not

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 28 June 2026

Preacher: Rev. Jeff Rafferty

[0:00] If you have your Bibles, follow along with me in just a moment. In Daniel chapter 3, we're going to be looking at Daniel chapter 3.! And don't panic. I know everybody's seeing those 30 verses.

I'm not going to keep us here beyond 1230. So, but a few years after I got out of seminary, I was serving a church south of Louisville, Kentucky, and I received a phone call from a former church member where I had served as youth pastor during my seminary days.
Unfortunately, the phone call wasn't to get acquainted again and catch up on old times, but to share with me that one of the youth that had been in my youth group had been killed in a car accident.
What made that a bad situation even more troubling was that it was the pastor's son. Now, he and his wife, they had not been able to have children, and so they had tried for years to adopt.
And a little bit later in life, to start a family, they were able to adopt a little boy, and they named him Matthew because Matthew means a gift from God.
[1:17] And so they treated that child like he indeed was a gift from God. And they raised him in the church and to believe in God and to live for the Lord.

And he was a good young man. He was. He honored his parents. He honored the Lord. And he grew up to be a big boy who went to college to play football at one of the Baptist colleges in Kentucky.
And he had come home over the Christmas break, dropped his laundry off at the house, and took off to hang out with some friends.
His parents never even saw him. And then that night, he was coming home, and he got off the side of the road a little bit too far in a curve, and he overcompensated and came back across the road and went off the road again.
If he had just stayed off the road on either occasion, he would have been fine. But he tried to steer it back onto the road again on an oncoming car, hit him in the side, and killed him instantly.
[2:24] You know, at times in our lives, it's hard to understand the will of God, isn't it? At times, it's very difficult to process and wonder the things that God does or allows.

And maybe sometimes it's even harder to understand the things that God does not do. You know, we go before God, and we pray in faith, and we ask him to protect.
We ask him to heal. We ask him to save our loved ones who are lost. And to work in our lives and situations and circumstances that we may be struggling with.
And we ask God to come into our lives and to work in a way that only he can do. And we come knowing that God is all-powerful, almighty, and he can do it.
But there are other times when God doesn't answer us in the manner in which we hope. He doesn't answer us in the way we've asked or even depended upon and trusted.
[3:27] The healing that we pray for doesn't come. The door doesn't open. The person we love doesn't get better. Situations didn't change.

And we wonder in situations like this, Matthew was given to his parents as a gift. And after 18 years, he was taken away from them.
And it's hard to understand why God would allow something like that to happen. And so we have faith in God. We know he's all-powerful, almighty, and he can do all things.
But it's in moments like this that we struggle to have faith. It's moments like this that really challenge our faith and to understand the Lord.
And that's why today we're going to be looking at Daniel chapter 3. And everybody here, if you grew up in church, or if you've been in church any period of time in your life, this is going to be a familiar Bible story lesson to you.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-13 23:09:34

[4:25] But I want to take it to a new level today, hopefully. It's not just a story about three young Jewish guys in a fiery furnace that we learned about in Sunday school.

It's a story about faith and how we can have faith in the Lord even when he doesn't answer our prayers. Or he doesn't answer them in the way we hoped, that we had cried out for, we trusted, or maybe we don't even see him working at all.
We don't see it. We know God is always working in our lives, but we may not understand it. And so this is a story about taking our faith as children of God to a new level, trusting his plan and his will in our lives when it's hurtful.
It's painful. You know, it's difficult for us to cope with and deal with. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego believed God could save them. They had no doubt about that.
They knew God could, even though their nation had been defeated by the Babylonians and they had been exiled, you know, to live in Babylon, they still trusted and believed that God could do this.
[5:38] But their faith wasn't based on that. Their faith wasn't based on the fact that God would do what they asked or what they needed or what, or from their eyes, and what they wanted.

Their faith was based upon who God was, his character, his holiness, and that he is the only one true God.
And they were willing, we'll see in just a moment, to say, our God is able to deliver us, but even if he doesn't, we will still worship him. And that's what I want us to talk about today as children of God, is how we can take our faith to a whole new level.
How we have faith in God in the midst of the struggles, in the midst of the pain, in the midst of the suffering, in the midst of the silence. How do we say, our God is able, but if not.
But if he doesn't. We're still going to trust him, we're still going to worship him, and we're going to give our lives fully and completely to him in all things.
[6:47] So, before we jump into our scripture this morning, in Daniel chapter 3, I want us to go to the Lord in prayer. Father, we thank you for the day. Thank you, Lord, for this nation.

Thank you for the freedoms that we have here to assemble together as the body of Christ and to worship you. But thank you even more that your son died for us, that your son bought our freedom from our sin, that we might be cleansed, we might be forgiven to be in a right relationship with you.
And I pray, Lord, today as we study your word, that you'll speak to each of our hearts. For those who are facing challenges, difficulties, hardships, or maybe struggling with faith, I ask, Lord, that you are here with us and that you're speaking to us, helping us to feel your hand upon us.
And we thank you for that, and we praise you in Jesus' name. Amen. So I know we've got 30 verses here, but we're going to shorten it a little bit.
I'm going to, well, I'm not going to shorten it too much, but I'm going to break it up and not read it all at once. But just so you know, this is taking place in Babylon. It was a customary in that day when a nation conquered another nation that they would come in and they would find the wisest, the most educated, the most skilled, and they would uproot them and relocate them somewhere else.
[8:24] It helped keep from uprisings and rebellions as they did that, and they would mix them and mingle them with other peoples. That's why the Samaritans were hated by the true Jews because that very thing had taken place in Samaria where a lot of the people were Jews, but then other people were brought in and they mingled, and then none of them could trace their lineage directly back to being a pure Jew.

And so that's why in the New Testament days we see such a hatred towards the Samaritan people by the Jews. So let's look at the first 18 verses at this time together.
King Nebuchadnezzar made a gold statue 90 feet tall and 9 feet wide, and he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.
Then he sent messages to the high officers, officials, governors, advisors, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the provincial officials to come to the dedication of the statue he had set up.
So all these officials came and stood before the statue King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Then a herald shouted out, People of all races and nations and languages, listen to the king's command.
[9:49] When you hear the sound of the horn, the flute, the zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and other musical instruments, bow to the ground to worship King Nebuchadnezzar's gold statue.

Anyone who refuses to obey will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace. So at the sound of the musical instruments, all the people, whatever their race or nation or language, bowed to the ground and worshipped the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-13 23:09:34

But some of the astrologers went to the king and informed on the Jews. They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, Long live the king. You issued a decree requiring all the people to bow down and worship the gold statue when they hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and other musical instruments.
That decree also states that those who refuse to obey must be thrown into a blazing furnace. But there are some Jews, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, whom you have put in charge of the province of Babylon.
They pay no attention to you, your majesty. They refuse to serve your gods and do not worship the gold statue that you have set up. Then Nebuchadnezzar flew into a rage and ordered that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought before him.
[11:16] When they were brought in, 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?

I will give you one more chance 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? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, Oh Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you.
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. Now listen to this.
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.
[12:28] You know, after being defeated by the Babylonians, you know, a lot of the Jews, the skilled, educated, individuals were moved.

And Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, along with men like Daniel, were identified as individuals who had great wisdom and leadership abilities.
So they were given responsibilities within the Babylonian Empire. And then, Nebuchadnezzar builds this gold statue, 90 feet high.
That's the size of a nine-story building. And nine feet wide. And he orders that everyone, when the music is played, that everyone would bow down and worship the gods that King Nebuchadnezzar had designated or that they worshipped in that area, which was not the God of Israel, not, you know, Yahweh.
And so, he commanded them. And he made it very clear what would happen if they did not. This wasn't a suggestion. It wasn't a request. It was a command and made it very clear that if they did not bow, immediately, they would be thrown into a fiery furnace.
[13:43] You didn't have time to think. If you didn't bow down right now, you're being thrown into a fiery furnace. So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they knew the command and they knew the consequences very clearly of that command.

And the scriptures don't tell us that they got together and talked about it, but they may have because there's three of them and they were all in agreement. they were not bowing down to that statue because they knew the laws of Israel and that God had given them to not have any images, any idols, to bow before no one besides God himself.
And so, they were not going to bow down to this statue. And that tells us something really important here in the scripture that we don't need to miss. That sometimes this type of faith, this type of allegiance to God and dedication to God has to be determined in advance.
We can't wait until we're face to face with the situation and then all of a sudden try to muster up the courage to stand for the Lord. We have to decide in advance, maybe today, right now, what we're going to do when we're confronted with compromising compromising our faith, maybe compromise to not honor the Lord but to adopt the practices and the customs of our culture.
You know, we may never be asked to bow down before a gold statue. I can almost guarantee that you won't. But the world still puts a lot of pressure on us, doesn't it?
[15:26] It pressures us to remain quiet, to blend in, to compromise what God has called us to be and to do.

God has called us to be set apart and to be different from the world and yet there's all this pressure from the world for us to blend in and to be just like everyone else, to make comfort a God or entertainment our God or to strive for success as if that is the most important thing in our lives.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-13 23:09:34

But God has called us not to get entangled in the things of this world, to be set apart, to be different and to honor Him and to not go along with culture and we may think well the whole world is going this way and I'm just one person.
But I want you to notice as we'll continue in the scriptures in just a moment, these three guys took a stand and you will see when we read the final verses the impact that those three guys, they were willing to die and if it weren't for God delivering them, they certainly would have but their faith made a huge difference.
Our faith today, it may not change the world but our faith today can change those around us. It can change our families, maybe friends, neighbors, those around us who see us living for the Lord and not compromising our faith, not adopting the beliefs of this world that we live in and as our nation drifts further and further away from the foundation of which it stands, we need Christians taking a stand, not necessarily being obnoxious and loud but just to live out your faith and not compromise what God has certainly called us to do.
[17:26] Well, when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, when they refused to bow, there were those just like with Daniel who were jealous of them, they wanted maybe their leadership position and so they went and they told Nebuchadnezzar that they had refused to bow and reminded him of the consequences of that and Nebuchadnezzar became furious.

He was a pretty prideful kind of guy and when he spoke, everybody listened because if you didn't, he would do away with you and so he was used to getting his way and so he asked them a question that was really important.
He says, who is the God who will deliver you out of my hands? I mean, he's already conquered Israel and he feels like he's conquered the God of Israel so he's asking them, what God are you believing in now?
Who's going to deliver you from me? And then their response is one of the strongest responses in all of Scripture of faith and trust and worship of God.
You know, they said the God that they served, the God of Israel would deliver them. They believed that God could rescue them from the furnace and from the power but then what they continue to say takes the story to a whole new level because their faith wasn't just based in God doing what they asked.
[19:00] their faith was in God alone and they said our God will deliver us but even if he doesn't. Let that sink in a minute.

How much of our worship or our faith is God taking care of us, providing for us, answering prayers? How much of our loyalty and allegiance?
our faith but what if we stood on the edge of a fiery furnace and we knew we were getting ready to go in? You know, their faith was even if he doesn't, we still will worship him.
You know, this is sometimes where we struggle in life, don't we? When we pray, we cry out to the Lord, we ask God to work and we move and he either says no or maybe he's remained silent for the moment.
Maybe we're not hearing, maybe we're not seeing, maybe we're not feeling him do anything. And it's a real challenge to maintain faith, isn't it?
[20:15] The hard part is trusting God when he's not doing what we think we need him to do. we think he needs to do this or move in this way or act in that way or deliver us from this or open this door for us or change the situation and we think, God, you need to do this and it's real hard to maintain faith over a period of time, maybe years, maybe decades that we've been praying and God has not answered in the manner in which we want him to or in the way we think he should.

But true faith, true worship of Jesus is not based on him doing what we ask him to do. True faith is knowing that God knows what we need far more than we do.
God knows what he's doing in our lives and he may be preparing us for something, he may be putting us through difficulties, hardships, so that he's rooting out pride, materialism, unforgiveness, a hard heart.
He may be preparing us for work like he was Joseph to get him ready for something and we have to learn to come to him even when we don't understand, even when it's painful, even when it's sacrificial and it cost us something to stand and worship him.
Now, what we're going to learn next, and I know we're running short on time, but I won't charge any extra, is God may not deliver us from the fire, but he'll be there with us in the fire.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-13 23:09:34

[22:07] So let's look at verses 19 through 29. Nebuchadnezzar was so furious with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that his face became distorted with rage.

He commanded that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual. Then he ordered some of the strongest men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace.
So they tied them up and threw them into the furnace, fully dressed in their pants, turbans, robes, and other garments. 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.
So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego securely tied fell into the roaring flames. But suddenly Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in amazement and exclaimed to his advisors, didn't we tie up three men and throw them into the furnace?
Yes, your majesty, we certainly did, they replied. Well, look, Nebuchadnezzar shouted, I see four men, unbound, walking around in the fire unharmed, and the fourth looks like a god.
[23:23] Then Nebuchadnezzar came as close as he could to the door of the flaming furnace, and he shouted, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the most high god.

Pay attention to that. Remember earlier he said, what god is going to deliver you? And now look, because of their faith, look what he's saying, servants of the most high god, come out, come here.
So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stepped out of the fire, then the high officers, officials, governors, and advisors 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 like smoke. Then Nebuchadnezzar said, praise to the god of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He sent his angels 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.
[24:28] 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 heat of rubble.

There is no other god who can rescue like this. You know, Nebuchadnezzar had ordered that the fire be heated up seven times hotter than normal and he found the strongest of his soldiers to bind them and throw them into the fire.
Now, at that moment in time, you might think, and these poor, young, naive men, they could have just bowed. They didn't have to pledge allegiance in their heart, did they?
They could have just bowed before that statue and gone on about life and lived happily ever after. Nobody would have known. They could have apologized They could to God later and asked for forgiveness.
It looked like they had made the wrong choice. It looked like they had put their hope and faith in the wrong thing. They're getting ready to be thrown into a fiery furnace and there is no hope.
[25:50] But wait. The scripture flips it upside down and shows us real quick. Nebuchadnezzar goes to the furnace and there's a door where he can look in the furnace and what does he see?

he doesn't see three dead corpses laying there burning. He sees four men walking around in the furnace unbound and unharmed and the fourth it said look like a god.
God didn't keep them from the fire did he? He didn't prevent them from this challenge. He didn't prevent them from being thrown into the fire but what he did is he met them in the fire.
And you know there are times in our lives when God lets us go through the fires because he needs to do something in our lives. He needs to mold us, shape us, root some things out of us or prepare us for something he has for us to do.
And you know your greatest testimony as a child of God is not that God prevented you from ever going through the fires. your greatest testimony is that God met you in the fire and that God walked with you in that fire and God took care of you in that fire and God worked according to his will and accomplished the things that he wanted to accomplish in your life.
[27:18] You know today maybe you're praying for something and you're believing that God is able. Keep praying. Keep trusting. Keep asking praying because God is able.

And Jesus told us in the parable of the persistent widow keep coming to him and praying. But also in our prayers ask him to develop our faith to a new level.
That our faith is not based on a God just taking care of us and making our life good and easy and perfect but that our faith is built on a God that even if he doesn't deliver us even if he doesn't heal

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-13 23:09:34

us even if he doesn't heal our loved ones we're still going to worship him.
You know because he is a God he is the only one true God Jesus Christ is the only true God and he came to this earth to die for us.
He took all of our sin upon himself and took our place and one day we'll be able to spend eternity in heaven and maybe we'll care about some of the answers but probably not.
[28:33] We'll probably just get there and that song I can only imagine I know I won't be on my face on the ground before Jesus Christ and all the heartache all the hardships all the difficulties that we've gone through in this lifetime they're going to seem like nothing compared to being in the presence of Jesus Christ.

So today as we close I want you to think about asking God to give you that kind of faith to believe that my God is able but even if he doesn't I will not compromise I will not leave Christ I will still worship.
Let's go to the Lord in prayer. Father we come to you today and we thank you for your word. We thank you for your truth. We thank you for this example for us in scripture.
We ask Lord that you give us that type of faith. Give us that type of faith. that even in the heartache even in the difficulties even in the sacrifices that we will still worship you.
We thank you for that and praise you in Jesus name. Amen.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-13 23:09:34