

Remnant Life Church  
May 3, 2026  
**Familiar Stories Retold:**  
**Bow or Burn**  
Daniel 3:1-30

The challenge of the familiar stories in the Bible is that we often forget details in light of how well we know the main points

- We often do the same thing in other areas of our lives
  - Now forgetting or missing details is okay when it's a familiar movie that you are rewatching for the 50<sup>th</sup> time
  - But that is not okay if it's something to do with your husband/wife
  - Or something a work that you've done a thousand times
  - And there is much you may not be realizing if it is a passage of Scripture that you've heard or read countless times
- Begin a series that will revisit the stories we heard in Sunday School or that we're so familiar with that we may have missed other aspects of their message that are also very important for us to know and learn
- The stories remain the same, but the meanings can, if we are paying attention, take on a new meaning as we change

This morning we are going to begin with a story that most everyone is familiar with

- It is the story of 3 men who were saved in a supernatural way by the power of God

**READ - Daniel 3:1-30**

A brief history of the time this takes place as context for the story

- Through much of OT history, there were 3 great dynasties that influenced much of that portion of the world for over 1200 years
  - Babylonia/Persian empire
  - The Greek Empire
  - The Roman Empire
- Babylonia/Persian
  - Begins at the Tower of Babel in **Gen 11**
    - This was an area originally settled by Nimrod who the Bible called a mighty warrior and hunter (**Gen 10:8-9**)
      - He was the son of Cush, the grandson of Ham
      - Making him the great-grandson of Noah
      - He also became a powerful king
        - His land included the settlements of Babel, Calneh, and the land of Shinar
        - He then went to Assyria where he established their capital city
        - The city of Nineveh

- The city of Babylon was located in the region of what was then known as Mesopotamia located today in modern-day Iraq as well as parts of Iran, Turkey, Syria and Kuwait
    - The northern part of that area, located between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, is known as the Fertile Crescent
      - It is because that stretch of land matches the biblical location of the *Garden of Eden*
      - And it was out of these first settlements of man that came many of the earliest foundations of communal living and survival
        - The wheel, the planting of crops, the earliest mathematics, astronomy and agriculture got their start in this land
    - It was a people and a culture that was established and thriving for thousands of years before Jesus was born
  - The main antagonist in our story this morning is a king whose name you are likely familiar with
    - Nebuchadnezzar ruled Babylon for 45 years beginning around 605 BC
      - It was, quite simply, the most powerful and advanced kingdom of that time
    - Among his many accomplishments historically was the building of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon (one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world)
      - He did this for his Midian wife Queen Amytis because it appeared similar to the land she came from and she was homesick
    - Upon his death, and after a brief time of sub-standard rulers, Belshazzar (likely the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar) became a co-regent until 539
      - And it was Belshazzar who, as recorded in **Dan 5**, saw a hand materialize before his eyes and write and write a warning message on a wall
  - In 539 BC, Cyrus the Great of Persia conquered Babylon and it was he who began to allow the Jews to return to Jerusalem after 70 years in exile
    - Eventually Cyrus' grandson, Darius the Great, became king
      - He was followed by Xerxes (the king in the story of **Esther**)
      - Who was then followed by Artaxerxes who was the king that allowed the nation of Israel to reestablish itself that we read about in the OT books of **Ezra** and **Nehemiah**
    - The final king of the Babylonian empire was Darius III who was conquered by the Greeks in 334 BC solidifying and expanding the prominence of the Grecian Empire
- The Greek Empire
  - Under the leadership of Alexander the Great expanded their empire to become one of the largest nations in terms of land mass
  - It was also one of the most influential in establishing modern-day patterns of life
    - Names such as Pericles (the first to establish political positions and function); Herodotus (called the father of history); Hippocrates (father of

- medicine and its practices); Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle (all fathers of secular philosophy)
    - They were all active at this time
- Roman Empire
  - The next great political kingdom was a driving force in the time of the NT writings - the Romans
  - From the time of its founding in 753 BC the Romans were involved in civil wars until finally united by Julius Caesar in the mid 50's BC
    - Caesar was assassinated on the Ides of March in 44 BC and replaced by the first emperor, Augustus
    - Caesar Augustus defeated Antony and Cleopatra as well as Brutus and Cassius, allowing Rome to come into its zenith of power as a united kingdom
  - It was during this time that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, in approximately 5-3 BC
  - Famous historical names continued to rule in Rome
    - Caesar Tiberius (John the Baptist and Jesus lived and ministered during his reign)
    - Others such as Caligula, Claudius, and Nero would follow
    - And it was during the rule of General Vespasian, who ascended the Roman throne at the death of Nero, who ordered his son General Titus to burn Jerusalem to the ground in 70 AD
  - We can then fast forward to 313 when Emperor Constantine ended the persecution of Christians by being baptized and making Christianity the state religion of the Roman empire
- And so let's come back to the time of Babylon and the story of these three young Jews in captivity
  - Nebuchadnezzar attacked and invaded Jerusalem on 3 separate occasions
    - It was during the first attack in 605 BC that he carried off the nobles to be assimilated into the Babylonian culture – among them are Daniel and his 3 friends (**Dan 1:1-7**)
    - The second attack in 587 BC led to more people being taken (**2 Kings 25**)
    - The third time, in 586 BC, he ordered the city burned, including the temple, to the ground (**Jer 52:13**) and took all of the sacred temple treasures (**Jer 52:17-23**)
- In our story this morning, we read that Nebuchadnezzar has built a golden statue of himself 90' high and 9' wide
  - Why did he do this?
    - In the second chapter of **Daniel**, we read that Nebuchadnezzar has had a dream
      - And so he called all of his advisors – all who were involved in things of mysticism, enchanters, astrologers, and magicians
        - This is what created the stark contrast between Daniel and these men

- Daniel received his power from God, the advisors received their power from satan
- But Nebuchadnezzar did not just want them to interpret his dream, he wanted them to also tell him what the dream was
  - Of course, they said no one could do that
  - But then they remembered Daniel
- The first thing that Daniel did was give God the glory for any wisdom or insight he had
  - Daniel then told the dream which was about an enormous statue made of many different materials and interpreted it
  - And in that interpretation, Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar he was the head of gold on a statue
- It was his vanity that led him to want to be the entire golden statue
  - His desire was to draw the Babylonian kingdom into unity under one religion
    - The religion of worshipping the king
  - What we see here is a continued attempt of satan to lead the world away from God into a man-made, one-world religion centered on self
    - The first was at the tower of babel in **Gen 11**
    - The second time is here in **Dan 3**
    - And the third time, a time yet to come, will be during the tribulation **Rev 13**
- In this account Daniel is apparently not present during this event so his three friends are on their own
  - While the story is well known what can we learn from the faith and commitment of these three?
- The fact is they could have easily avoided the punishment by utilizing a technique that our world, especially our culture has perfected to an art – making excuses with justification
  - If we get ourselves killed who will look out for the welfare of the Jews living here? (“He who learns to run away lives to fight another day”)
  - They do things differently here than back home. (“When in Rome...”)
  - We’ll fall down but we won’t really worship the statue – we’ll just make it look that way (Along the same line of those who practice “Christian Yoga”)
  - We’ll do it just this one time then ask God to forgive us. Surely, He’ll understand. (Sin more to experience the grace of God more?)
  - The king has been good to us so we really do owe him one, besides Daniel’s not here to help us with this decision (Definition of integrity?)
  - This is nothing that our ancestors didn’t do and they even set those idols up in the temple – God will forgive us too (Sin and its consequences are present no matter the time or circumstances)

- Now, as far as excuses go these are all pretty good, but even a great excuse cannot condone sin
- These three young men had the Word of God burned into their hearts and in particular one verse
  - **Ex 20:4-5** - *You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God,*
- How did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stand so firmly in the face of certain death?
  - First, they had full confidence in the power of God
    - **Vs 17** – *If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and He will rescue us from your hand, O king.*
    - How is faith like that developed and honed?
      - Through trials and the fire of difficult times
      - God allows these times to come with purpose – and it is for our good
        - The Bible often utilized husbandry or working with plants as metaphors because the readers would likely be able to better understand the point being made given their lives of working the ground
        - Pruning is the act of cutting off a branch in order for a tree to grow bigger, stronger, and increase productivity
      - So too the trials, or prunings God allows do the same for us spiritually and can be seen in our lives
        - And the greater the pruning, the greater the growth
        - In fact, Jesus Himself said in **John 15:1-2** - *I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.*
        - The trials and tribulations in our lives are the pruning knife He uses to produce even more lavish and significant fruit in our lives
          - But we must live in the faith and confidence that He knows best and loves us even in the midst of those trials
  - Second, they were completely submissive to His will, whatever the outcome might be
    - **Vs 18** – *But even if He does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.*
      - What we read here, is the same faith demonstrated by Job when he said, *Though He slay me, yet I will trust in Him (Job 13:15)*
      - And is later echoed by Paul in **Phil 1:20** - *I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.*
    - Faith means trusting in God

- Faith does not mean that you will either know or understand what His specific purpose in your life might be.
  - It does mean a ready willingness to follow Him whatever His purpose is.
  - Even if you takes you through the most difficult of times
- You cannot endure the trials of life glorifying Him if you do not understand and live by these principles
- Because if you do not understand, you will resort to any means necessary to cope with and change the difficult circumstances
  - And most often that means relying on and promoting self
  - This is what Nebuchadnezzar kept doing
    - God used him as an instrument in the history of Israel and many times it sounded like Nebuchadnezzar came to believe in the One true God
    - But he never did
  - Oh, he said the words several times, but even in those words you can see that real change never occurred
    - His heart only ever experienced religious conviction, but without spiritual conversion
    - In the presence of these godly men, his sinful heart was often shaken but never renewed
  - Even after the three come out and are inspected
    - Not injured in any way, not burned, not even the smell of smoke on them
    - Nebuchadnezzar made the declaration, in **Dan 3:29** - *Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way.*
      - Notice he did not declare my God, but their God
      - Nebuchadnezzar was never willing to remove himself from the place of worship in his own life
      - The Bible does not even state that the statue was taken down
    - This great king vividly demonstrates a position, one that many who call themselves Christians are in today
      - That is the difference between temporary spiritual diversion and true conversion
  - Shadrach, Meshack, and Abednego refused to compromise their faith even in the face of certain death
    - They had many seemingly valid excuses at their disposal, but they would not use them
    - They did not rant and wail as their counterparts so often did, they quietly and humbly stood their ground confident

in the power of God to save them, if that was His will for them.

- And like these three you are presented today with the same command to bow or burn
  - Like these three you are going to be faced with these same types of decisions
  - Will you compromise or will you stand for Jesus Christ regardless of the consequences?
  - And make no mistake, you are going to be faced with these circumstances and this same question every day
    - Oh, it is very unlikely you will be staring at death on the other side of whatever you decide
    - But that is what makes it even more of a challenge
      - Often no one might even know what you decide to do
      - The smaller the risk, the greater the temptation to just give in
- And while those temptations and worldly opportunities will change one thing remains consistent – God’s love and protection over His children who are faithful
  - **Dan 3:27**- *the fire had not harmed them; not a hair on their heads was singed; their clothes were not scorched; they did not smell of smoke*
- I believe the question God is asking us today is the same one He asked the three of them when they stood before the king, “Will you trust Me?”
  - That incredibly difficult situation you’re dealing with...will you trust me?
  - That person you live with, work with, who is in your life...will you trust me?
  - Will you trust me with your health, your finances, your job...

The faithful presence of God in our lives is what the words that Paul wrote assure us of when considering the power of the world versus the power of our almighty God

- **Romans 8:38** - *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
- Praise God for His goodness and mercy extended to us now and forever!