

Ministry on Daniel

Part 2

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Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.

[00:00:00] 33 verse 14, God speaketh once, yea, twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men in slumberings upon the bed, then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword. Now in the book of Daniel chapter 3, Daniel 3 verse 1, Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose [00:01:21] height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. Verse 8, At that time certain Chaldeans came near and accused the Jews. They spake, and said to the king, Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live forever. Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, shall [00:02:09] fall down and worship the golden image. And whoso falleth not down and worshipeth, that he shall be cast into the midst of a burning, fiery furnace. There are certain Jews, whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, have not regarded thee. They serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image, which thou hast set up. Verse 19, Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Therefore [00:03:01] he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated. And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning, fiery furnace. Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosem, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning, fiery furnace. Therefore, because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound [00:04:05] into the midst of the burning, fiery furnace. Then Nebuchadnezzar, the king, was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered, and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered, and said, Lo, I see four men loose walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. Verse 28, Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and hath changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that [00:05:04] they might not serve, nor worship any God, except their own God. Therefore I make a decree, that every people, nation, and language, which speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill, because there is no other God that can deliver after this thought. Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon. I suppose most of us are conversant with that oft-quoted statement in Job 33, whether or not we know where it's from. God speaketh once,

[00:06:08] yea twice, and man perceiveth it not. Now we are here tonight because God has a message for us, you and me, but being what we are, we find it easier, we find it more pleasant, we find it more acceptable to see other people's faults. Makes us uncomfortable, doesn't it, to think about our own. But God is gracious, God is kind, God is merciful, and he has sprinkled freely in [00:07:06] the scripture of truth, illustrations of lessons that he wants us to learn, and the book of Daniel is a good example. Of the many things that might be said about Nebuchadnezzar, I want to single out two, two incidents in the life on earth of Nebuchadnezzar. Now at every stage, while it's interesting to speak about Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, who lived what 2,700 years ago, 2,600 years ago thereabouts. It's only really worthwhile if we realize that through Nebuchadnezzar, [00:08:03] and the lessons that he had to learn, that God is speaking to you and to me. God speaketh once, yea twice, but man perceiveth it not. In case you're under any delusion, let me say also, God speaketh once, yea twice, yet woman perceiveth it not, yet boy perceiveth it not, yet girl perceiveth it not. None of us is excluded from the lesson we need to learn. Nebuchadnezzar is well placed that we might learn from him. Nebuchadnezzar was a king, the son of a king, born in a palace.

[00:09:04] How favoured he was. Never wanted a mouthful of food. Never short of a refreshing drink. God was good to him. God has caused you and me to be born in a land, in a day, where we have every favour extended to us. Some of you, I can see, move about, not only in this country but throughout the world, and you're aware of how other people are obliged to live, or as we would say, exist. What if you'd [00:10:16] been born a Kurd? An Ethiopian? A South African Negro? Or in some of the more poverty stricken back streets of Newcastle even? Some of you have lived through hard times, I know that. Some of you were born in very poor circumstances, but God has been good to all of us and he's been gracious and kind and given us more [00:11:04] than we need. We're only promised, aren't we, what we need? But God has provided us with more than we need, with the intention that we should be grateful to him, the good and faithful creator. Sadly, the human heart is such that rather than being grateful to the great providing God, there's a tendency for each of us to think we can paddle our own canoe. We can get on by ourselves, thank you very much. Nebuchadnezzar? Born into very convenient, congenial circumstances. Looked up to as the [00:12:01] king, all-powerful. How he must have enjoyed the message of the prophet Daniel. When Daniel said, now look, you're the king like there's never been a king like you. Your power is the kind of power that's never been known. I'm sure Nebuchadnezzar preened himself and said, quite right, I'm just the man to be that kind of king in that kind of kingdom. And his heart was lifted up in pride. Let us just pause there. When we consider the goodness of God towards us, whether old or young, the kind of family that he caused us to be born into, what thanks have we given to God for the way that he's blessed us even in a material way? What thanks is due to God for the many of us who've been born into families where God is honoured, where the word of God is read, [00:13:22] where parents and grandparents have prayed for us that the blessing of the Lord which maketh rich and addeth no sorrow with it might be our portion day by day. Nebuchadnezzar, we read about him, heart lifted up in pride. How susceptible we are to it. And his servants, his officials came along and said, now look, if you're the greatest king in the world, this should be publicised. Let's make a great image of him. [00:14:06] Let's make a great statue, 90 feet high, 9 feet wide, and everyone will see it and everyone will have to bow to it. And in bowing to that, they will be worshipping you. Nebuchadnezzar, of course, should have said, now look, be sensible. I'm only in this situation because of the goodness of God. If you want to give thanks, give thanks to the God who gives us all the air that we breathe. We couldn't last without God, could we? In broad terms, I think it's true to say, we can last a few weeks without food.

[00:15:08] We can last a few days without water. We can last a few minutes without air. We can't last at

all without God. In him we live and move and have our being.

All things continue to exist in virtue of the being of Christ, the Son of God, as the New Testament tells us. Nebuchadnezzar, oh, how sad. You know, we all yield to temptations of different sorts. Some of us fall when we get too much money. Some of us fall when we have too little. Some of us fall when we have too much criticism. And many of us fall if we are given too much praise. Fortunately, most of us are spared from that. [00:16:20] Nebuchadnezzar, he says, what a good idea. Let's tell everybody what a wonderful man I am. Everything that happens in the kingdom, they owe it all to me. I'm the big noise. I'm number one. Get on with it. Build this 90 feet statue. Of course, it was a put-on. The people who suggested it knew for a fact that there were those in the kingdom who knew that worship should only be given to God.

[00:17:06] Worship God, the scripture says. There were those who would give honor, real honor, the top honor, only to God, to whom they owed their breath. And then when these schemers made the image, built the statue, how ready they were to come to King Nebuchadnezzar and say, you'll never guess what's happened. Tell me, said the king. These Jews, these captives that were brought from southern Palestine, who owe everything to you and you've been good to them, King Nebuchadnezzar, they've had the audacity to refuse to bow to the image. The king was so uplifted in the pride of his heart that he said, well, we said what we would do, we'll have to do it. And ultimately, these three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were thrown into the seven times heated, fiery furnace. [00:18:26] You're sitting there comfortable. You're sitting there handsome, in person, in lifestyle, in clothes. How real is your faith?

What answer would you give if someone said, now look, unless you pay due honor to this statue that's in the street there, unless once a week you bow before it, you're going to suffer. You're going into a fiery furnace. [00:19:08] I think most of us at the start would have a few palpitations, wouldn't we? Well, would it really matter? The Lord would know our heart isn't really in it. But every now and again, God pushes us into a crisis where we have the opportunity to demonstrate how real our faith is. Let me encourage you. If you are a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ, if you believe that Jesus died for you and rose again, I'm convinced of this. If it was necessary for the glory of God, if it actually happened in your life that your faith was tested in that way, if you really trust in the living God who sent his son Jesus into the world for your salvation, [00:20:24] if you really trust in such a Savior, let me encourage you. I'm convinced that God would give those of us who are real the grace for the occasion. Difficult to judge at the moment. Many of us may well have gone soft because we've never had to suffer for our faith. Well, it's an opportunity, isn't it, to think about Nebuchadnezzar's treatment of these three godly men, and that when he said to them, now what sort of a god are you? Where's your god now? What's he going to be like? How's he going to look after you now? Lovely reply. I didn't read it. It's in the text. [00:21:15] They said, don't you worry about us. Our God is able. He's able to deliver, and he will. That's our faith in him. No doubt about it at all.

But, O King, they said, in case you're in any doubt, if God, for his own best purposes, if it's his will that we are not delivered, well, so be it. We'll still not bow down to the image. Now, a faith that was prepared to suffer. And they did. And they were sustained. And a figure, a fourth, an extra person, having fellowship with them in their sufferings, in the terrible heat of the fiery surface, [00:22:22] furnace. One, the scripture says, like unto the Son of God. You Bible students, look that word up, the Son of God. Not here, the meek and lowly Jesus.

Not here in his personal charm, but here in his official judicial character, the one who's in charge of

the situation and consoles those who trust in him. And he says to them, don't you worry. I'm here. I've got the situation under real proper control. [00:23:16] And he had. Now, apart from being an interesting historical fact, God was speaking once to Nebuchadnezzar through this amazing, miraculous incident. God speaketh once. Now, by what he said afterwards, it would seem as though he'd got the message. Verse 29, there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.

[00:24:03] Something happened to other people. And he seemed to have learned the lesson. God spoke once to him. I want to read a little bit from chapter four, where God spoke to Nebuchadnezzar again. Verse one, Nebuchadnezzar, the king unto all people, nations and languages that dwell in all the earth, peace be multiplied unto you. Verse four, I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in mine house and flourishing in my palace. I saw a dream which made me afraid and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me. Verse 19, then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour and his thoughts troubled him. The king spake and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream or the interpretation thereof trouble thee. [00:25:19] Belteshazzar answered and said, my lord, the dream be to them that hate thee and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies. Nebuchadnezzar has another dream here, given another vision of what's going to happen in the future. How privileged we are when God draws the veil aside and lets us see what's going to happen in the future. God says to us, the dead, small and great, will stand before God and the books will be opened and every individual who is at that tribunal will be judged according to their deeds.

[00:26:23] According to their works. And there'll be a clear line of demarcation. Those whose names are in the Lamb's book of life, the final court of appeal, will be blessed.

But those who aren't, because all have sinned, those who are not covered by the blood of the Lamb, their portion will be the same as that for the devil and his angels in the lake of fire. [00:27:10] The tragedy is not that that is the end. For those who know not God, that's bad enough. The double tragedy is that many who know that, who've been told it from the scriptures, who realise it and agree with it mentally, would have not acted upon it, that they will be in the lake of fire because God has spoken to them once, yea, twice and they've done nothing about it. There are some here who for 40, 50, 60, 70 years have taught and watched while boys and girls and older people have heard the sinful gospel message of Jesus and his wonderful love.

[00:28:11] A few have responded, but oh the many who have gone on heedlessly, carelessly, without an interest in the destiny of their precious soul. Those of you who've witnessed to neighbours, to unconverted relatives, to workmates, to school pals over the years, that will be the end for them. All Nebuchadnezzar was spoken to not once, but twice. Read the rest of the chapter, wherein we are told that he who'd been so proud of his kingdom, that God who'd made him such an exalted person officially in his kingdom, that God would bring him low, [00:29:11] that such would be his mental and moral condition, that he'd be brought down to the level of the brute beasts in appearance and in habits. And the scripture says, all this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar, verse 28.

Verse 37, 36 says, at the same time my reason returned unto me, verse 37, I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the king of heaven, all whose works are truth and his ways judgment, and those that walk in pride he is able to abase. [00:30:03] He now takes sides with God against himself. He who'd been so proud is now able to agree with God and align himself with God in true repentance and says, that which God has said about me is absolutely true. As I read the book of Daniel, I'm never quite sure what condition of soul Nebuchadnezzar ended his days in.

Maybe you are convinced. Read the book of Daniel again. This seems to be the last we hear of him, and it's on a good note. He's saying, God's right, I've been wrong all along, everything that I have I owe to God, he had to bring me down in order to lift me up. [00:31:13] Where are we? I want to say to you two conclusions I've come to over the last few months. When I say it, you may say, well that's obvious, that's what the gospel says. If it's obvious to you, not only do you believe it, but do you act upon it? Let me say two things about the death of Christ at Calvary. Yes, God gives us a true vision of ourselves by giving us a true vision, a true sight of the Lord Jesus on the cross. [00:32:01] Judge what I'm going to say against your knowledge of what the Bible says about God, about Christ, about Calvary.

What Jesus did at Calvary, in dying, in sacrifice for sin, is of sufficient value to God that it covers every sin that's ever been committed by man.

By everybody that's ever lived. Oh, that's a tremendous value, isn't it? The value to God potentially is sufficient to cover every sin committed by every individual from the beginning of time. [00:33:06] That's what scripture says. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from every kind and every individual sin that's ever been committed. We'll leave that for a moment and go to the other end of the scale. Do you believe this? If there'd only been one sinner that ever lived, you.

If you'd only committed one sin, do you believe that that one sin committed by you is so obnoxious to God that the death of Christ at Calvary would have been absolutely necessary to deal with the claims of God upon you?

[00:34:13] One sinner having committed one sin. Sin is as horrible to God as that. It's not a question of you saying, well, I think it might be nice to be a Christian. I think I will decide to become a Christian. These people I think I could get on with, and yes, I think that's what I'll do with my life. The bad news is, don't think about anybody else. Your sins committed by you made it necessary for Jesus to suffer and bleed and die at Calvary.

[00:35:02] Oh, but the good news, the glad tidings of the gospel is that when Jesus went to the cross just for you, just for your sins, in personal, individual love for you, that when he did that, the value to God of what he did was sufficient to cover every sin of every sinner. The Bible says the righteousness of God is unto all. It's available to everybody, and it rests upon all those who believe. There's grace available tonight for any who recognize that your sins made it necessary for the death of Christ at Calvary, for the shedding of his precious blood. [00:36:06] But, oh, if coming as an individual just for yourself, you receive a blessing which you find is enjoyed by many other sinners who can sing as we sang, nor have I gotten but what I received. I am only a sinner saved by grace. Now the assurance comes when God says to you, if you really believe that, that your sins made it necessary for Jesus to die, if you trust him as the only possible way of salvation, God says, look, you can be really sure that your sins are forgiven because, look you, God says, I've raised him from the dead. The work was sufficient. The work was complete. The love of God was so real and full, the love of Christ was sufficient in coming into the world to die in that you and I might live unto God. [00:37:24] The assurance that God wants us to enjoy is conveyed, at least in part, by the hymn we are going to sing now. And let us, as we sing it, just think about what we've been talking about. 415. Again, it's a question, will your anchor hold in the storms of life? You know, there's no apology for being personal in the gospel. I'm saved because somebody said to me one day, are you sure you're saved? Have you confessed the Lord? You believe in your heart? Have you confessed with your mouth? [00:38:16] The challenge comes to all of us of any age. Do we believe in the heart? Have we confessed with the

mouth? If so, we can sing this lovely hymn of assurance. We have an anchor that keeps the soul steadfast and sure while the billows roll, fastened to the rock which cannot move, grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love. 415. Will your anchor hold in the storms of life? When the fountains fall and the wind blows by, when the sun rises and the day goes away, [00:39:06] will your anchor hold? We have an anchor that keeps the soul steadfast and sure while the billows roll, fastened to the rock which cannot move, grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love.

Will your anchor hold in the strains of fear? When the rapeseed that grows and bleeds in fear, when the surges rage and the wild winds blow, [00:40:05] shall we ever be raised again from our fall? We have an anchor that keeps the soul steadfast and sure while the billows roll, fastened to the rock which cannot move, grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love.

Will your anchor hold in the storms of death? When the waters roll till the nature's breath, on the rising night we shall never fail, [00:41:06] will your anchor hold? We have an anchor that keeps the soul steadfast and sure while the billows roll, fastened to the rock which cannot move,