

Going against the Flow! Daniel 3:1-30 Counter Culture

When I was in High School our youth group went up to Kings Canyon a couple of times – Camp/Hike

A)Hike to these pools – Jump off these cliffs – Fun

B)There was this one particular place in the Kings river where to get to the pool of water

1)We had to jump in the Kings river and swim as fast as we could against the flow to get to the other side.

C)Our best swimmer – Go first – ROPE for WEAK SWIMMERS

1)None of us guys wanted to use the rope – Jump and go for it –

D)Swimming upstream against the flow was not easy – but it was not IMPOSSIBLE either

1)The Reward was great – Secluded pools – cliffs

Going against the flow can be a challenge!

A)Entering a crowded auditorium when everyone else seems to be exiting – Sea of people – going against you.

B)Dodging people – My wife gets so mad at me when I do that!

1)She feels like I'm pulling her through the crowd!

C)Once again – Not easy – but not impossible.

1)Grace and precision Vs Pushy & Obnoxious

Well we are living in a culture where being a follower of Christ – a Follower of God's Word is going to require us – More and more to go against the flow

A)Culture is Changing: But God doesn't change – His word doesn't change –

B)If we are going to be those who stand for God and seek to glorify God with our lives

1)We too will have to go against the flow - Grace and precision that glorifies God – Carries out His Mission

C)Or we can come across as Pushy and obnoxious and completely misrepresenting the heart of God!

In our text today we see the example of three young men – Stood against the Tide.

A)Went against the flow – Their lives stand as an incredible example to us today.

B)Age old story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego – We all know it but it is so pertinent to the day and age we are living in.

Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits. {Cubit is 18 inches 60 cubits 90 feet high 6 cubits 9 feet wide big tall skinny statue.}

He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. ²And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. ³So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. {Who's who in Babylon

⁴Then a herald cried aloud: "To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, ⁵that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; ⁶and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."

⁷So at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, and lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

The Greek Septuagint begins Ch. 3 this way in the 18th year – Ch. 2 was in the 2nd year – so 16 yrs have passed

A)Recall in Chapter 2 King Nebuchadnezzar Had that dream – statue – 4 World Kingdoms.

B) Babylon was represented by the head of gold

1) Overthrown – other world kingdoms follow

16YRS LATER NOTHING HAS HAPPENED!

C) Babylon is still the most powerful Kingdom in the world – Nebuchadnezzar is still on Top

1) BUT That dream that he had and the interpretation of Daniel is still on his mind.

D) He liked the fact that he was the head of gold

1) **He is going to re-write the story!**

So Nebuchadnezzar builds a statue that is all gold!

90 ft high by 9 ft wide – Solid gold – positions it in the plain of Dura –

A) Archeologist – found location – Giant Base

B) The whole kingdom gathered together – at least 200,000 people including all **the who's who in the kingdom**

C) Rock band – set up to play – Quite a Celebration.

D) According to V.5 When the band begins to play everyone was instructed to bow down and **worship** the gold image!

This scene is so pertinent to what is happening in our country right now. Incredible relevance

A) Here is a scene where the **law in the land** sets a mandate that clearly goes against – God's word.

B) God's word said – No graven images - Worship God Alone!

1) **Worship at heart of passage – 9 times in 30 verses**

What should Christ followers do when the culture around them – rejects God's word.

A) What are we to do when Government mandates that which goes against Scripture.

B) We have a great example in Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

1) **Question is where was Daniel – Did He Bow?**

C) Hard time believing that the guy who took a stand in something as simple as food – Bow to an Image.

D) Most Scholars believe Daniel **was away on official Business -**

1) His Character and conduct throughout the book supports that

E) If he was there He would have been joining his three friends in their stand.

What should Christians do when the Government is asking you to do something or accept something that goes against God's Word?

A) Daniel 3 is a good answer to that question

B) How to live in a largely non-believing world!

1) A world that is becoming more and more antagonistic against God – THE BIBLE.

Notice 3 things

#1 THEY WOULD NOT BOW! RD V. 8-13

⁸ Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and **accused** the Jews. ⁹ They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! ¹⁰ You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, shall fall down and **worship the gold image**; ¹¹ and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. ¹² There are certain Jews whom **you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up.**"

¹³ Then Nebuchadnezzar, **in rage and fury**, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king.

PICTURE THIS SCENE

A) 200,000 people dropping to their faces to the ground, as far as eye could see. **And there stood 3!**

B) TALK about standing out like big pimple.

C) **If you have ever been the only one in your family to believe a certain way about something.**

1) Or only one in the office at work – Sort of know what this feels like – Multiply times 200K

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego - The Trusting Trio! The 3 Champions, The 3 Holy MEN,

A)What a Pledge of Allegiance !- They obviously had talked about this ahead of time.

B)I wonder if they discussed Isaiah 43:2, together which says: **“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you.”**

C)Talk about Standing against the tide and going against the flow – This was HUGE – BOLD!!!!

Think for a minute how easy it would have been to rationalize bowing.

1. They could have rationalized “well God knows our hearts.” – **Standing on the inside**

2. **They could have rationalized** “the Jews in the kingdom need us, we are in this prominent position, and if we die – they will be worse off.”

3. **They could have said** – “well everyone else is doing it and no one back home in Jerusalem will know – so what is the big deal?”

They could have rationalized in any one of those ways but it would have violated their Conscience.

A)They knew that to bow down was an act of worship and they were not going to Worship anything but God

B)They went against the Flow – they Stood against the tide. – THEY WOULD NOT BOW!

1)They would not WORSHIP the image!

C)Listen THE current struggle in our culture is not **about equality – it is about Worship!**

1)Are we going to worship God? Or are we going to worship ourselves.

See According to Romans 1 Idolatry is at the center of man’s rebellion against God.

A)Romans 1 describes the depravity of man in this way-

B)They ignored the Creator - turned instead to worship the created. – Rebelled against God

1)Idol worship – Self worship = Rebellion –

C)Anytime man Ignores God – Says in his heart – he knows better than God – that is Rebellion -

Result Romans 1 – God gave them over to their own pursuits

A)Go against the natural – exchanged that which was natural for that which is unnatural – Men with men

B)Women with women – List there very plainly – part of that Rebellion – Self worship –
1)Resulted in the sin of Homosexuality – Lesbianism

C)That is what God’s word says: Culture says – Ok

D)What do we do with that ?

1) Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego would not Bow to the cultural pressure – **everyone else was going with the flow**

E)They would not bow – Because their lives were TETHERED TO GOD’S WORD.

Last Friday was a sad day in America when our Supreme court – Legalized Same sex Marriage.

A)I was blessed by what Franklin Graham wrote on that day in Response.

“The Supreme Court of the United States has ruled today that same-sex marriage is legal in all 50 states. With all due respect to the court, it did **not define marriage, and therefore is not entitled to re-define it.**

Long before our government came into existence, marriage was created by the One who created man and woman—Almighty God—and His decisions are not subject to **review or revision** by any manmade court.

God is clear about the definition of marriage in His Holy Word: **“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh”** (Genesis 2:24).”

Listen we can’t go around re-defining God’s word, whenever IT doesn’t fit with culture.

A)Culture wants to say **Premarital sex** is ok as long as two people love each other –

B)God who Loves people and wants them to be happy says Sex outside of Marriage is sin!

C) Culture portrays - Adultery – ok – two people are in lousy marriages

1) Sin – wrong –

D) Culture says: If two people love each other they should be able to marry – doesn't matter – their gender

1) God who Loves people and wants them to be happy says in his word – Homosexuality is a sin

E) If we are going to be Worshipers of God – Christ Followers – WE CAN'T BOW TO CULTURE!

So #1 They would not Bow

#2 THEY WOULD NOT BEND – rd V 14-18

¹⁴ Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, “*Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up?*”

{Nebuchadnezzar liked these guys – Valuable to him/ 2nd chance -

¹⁵ Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?” PRIDE

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter,

In other words THEY were saying – there is no need for further discussion. – The matter is not up for debate:

¹⁷ If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.”

V. 16-18 contain the only recorded words of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

A) Speaking with one voice, they make a remarkable declaration of faith.

B) ONE WAY OR ANOTHER – OUR GOD IS GOING TO DELIVER US!

But I want you to notice that there is an attitude of respect that they have toward Nebuchadnezzar

A) They don't say: listen you pagan egotistical King

B) We are not bowing to your stupid IMAGE

C) No - They address him with kindness and respect.

1) He is their boss

Smart – He was known to fly off the handle and over react – but they were already going to the Furnace.

A) I think their reaction is a great example of how we should address those who oppose us.

B) Love and respect for them as human beings.

C) They might get all angry and try to get us to react in the flesh.

Cc) Christians need to remain – calm and loving

1) BUT FIRM IN OUR CONVICTIONS

D) Often when people respond in anger it is because they are convicted!

We need to remember that people who oppose the truth of God's word – who oppose Jesus – Deception. /Blinded

A) We used to be there as well.

B) Blessed as well by this Facebook post from my son on Friday – Heart of Jesus in this matter.

To my fellow Christ followers: there are times where we start to lose heart as we see battles over things we hold dear are lost. Our discouragement can turn to bitterness towards people, and even hatred towards those we'd label as our enemies.

Please remember... people are not the enemy... they are victims and prisoners of the true enemy. They are captives of their desires. They have no hope. We once were like them. Hopeless. Lost. Given to the darkness. But Christ and his love broke through the darkness and freed us.

Please don't allow your hearts to grow bitter.

Please don't give into the trap of complaining and negativity. Remember... though it seems we sometimes lose the battle... the WAR is already won. Christ is victorious. He has done it. He is coming back! The war was won with Love, not hate.

The harvest is plenty. But we won't see it if we view sinners as the enemy. We're surrounded by captives, and Jesus has the key to the cells.

It is much easier to complain about someone's sin than it is to actually lovingly take the Gospel to them.

Let's not take the easy road. Do not dismay of the darkness. Take the light into it.

Precious Church please listen to me- We must never lose sight of the fact – IT IS ABOUT SOULS.

A)I mentioned this a month ago – Message – future of America.

B)The reason we don't see America in the end times prophetic picture - Two fold

1)Judgment of God – One way that God judges is he removes his hand.

C)He says – Do what you want to do – Been happening for years – this is another example of it.

1)God says America you want to reject me – will/way
Go for it –

D)Then He removes his hand OF PROTECTION.

But Judgment often precedes Revival –

A)There are souls weighing in the Balance – we can't lose sight of that either

B)Jesus loves sinners – died for sinners – Where sin abounds grace abounds even more.

C)Rapture is coming – Delay is for Souls – 1 Peter 3 ONE LAST HARVEST

D)WHEN Christians take a loving STAND against Culture – don't bow they don't bend –

1)Yes creates opposition – but it is also creates opportunity {people realize their choices don't satisfy

Back to our Story

So the first thing they do in not bending – not compromising - They respectfully stood their ground.

Second, they affirmed their faith in God. "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, our God whom we serve IS ABLE to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king (Daniel 3:17).

Proclaiming their Great Confidence in God

Third, they accepted God's will in advance. ¹⁸ But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."

This was a declaration of the Sovereignty of God and their decision to trust in his Sovereignty!

A)Our problem is we know how the story ends.

B)We tend to read everything in light of the miraculous deliverance.

C)But that misses an important point. The three young men had no idea HOW God was about to deliver them!

They hadn't received any advance warning, no special revelation, no angels whispering, "Don't worry. God is going to deliver you."

A)Nothing like that happened. They recognized that obeying God might not be pleasant to them.

B)And even so, they didn't make their own obedience contingent on God doing what they wanted

1)As they stood before the king, they knew they might die.

C)Comes a time in all of our lives where we have to choose between being – Accepted and liked by men

1)Or walking in Holiness before God – listen, rarely do those two things go together!

#1 They wouldn't Bow!

#2 They wouldn't Bend!

#3 THEY WOULD NOT BURN! V.19-30

They are Punished rd 19-23

19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach,

Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. 20 And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, and cast them into the burning fiery furnace. 21 Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 22 Therefore, because the king's command was urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. 23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

The flames were so hot that the strong men were more or less cremated on the spot.

24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?"

They answered and said to the king, "True, O king."

25 "Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

Literally – Son of the gods – he looks like a Deity

Here we see the amazing Care of God for His servants!

A) When Nebuchadnezzar looked into the flames, he expected to see the young men roasting to death.

Crispy Critters

B) Instead, he saw them loosed walking around, unharmed, and a fourth man walking with them, who looks like the Son of God

C) Who was the fourth man? Jesus Christ himself.

D) He stepped OUT of heaven, walked into the blazing furnace and said to the flames, "Cool it!"

1) And they did.

E) Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are instantly **MICROWAVE SAFE**

26 Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke, saying, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here." Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire. 27 And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king's counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them.

APPLICATION FOR US – TRIALS

A) Where is Jesus in the midst of your fiery trial? Your Storm – He is right there

Hebrews 13:5-6

"I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

Our trials become an opportunity to see Jesus in a new way! –

A) Mark 4 Disciples – Stillers of the storm

B) 2 Chapters later – Rescuer – Walking on water Waves over their head – under His feet

1) Their trial was His Sidewalk

C) Trials are meant to strengthen our faith

PETER - 1 Peter 4:12 Fiery Trial

James 1:2-4 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

A) The trial, the tribulation is producing something in us / it is accomplishing something / it is productive

B) Basketball in High school running team - preseason conditioning camp was brutal - coach ran us hard –

1) Guys throw up

C) 1st year I experienced excruciating leg cramps - come on me at night while I was doing home work

1) **Scream - throw myself back in chair**

D) It was a very difficult time - but it resulted in me being in the best shape of my life.

1) When Basketball was over – went into baseball – my main sport – **Amazing** – stronger, quicker, faster

The following fall when Basket ball conditioning camp came around **I actually looked forward to it because I knew what the results would be**

A) That is what James is saying we can rejoice in tribulations.

B) Because we know it is producing something in us / it is productive

Think of it this way – when a woman gets Pregnant her body goes thru a lot of Changes /

A) Morning sickness / puts on weight – stretches – bowling ball

B) Then comes the Labor – (good word) torture might be better.

1) Sweating / pain/ screaming / Absolutely unreal –

C) My wife turned into a Different woman {**I don't know this woman – give me my Wife back**

D) Out comes this baby – and the **same Baby** that causes the pain & the discomfort brings forth Joy after it is born –

1) Amazing how quickly they forget the suffering
(*I want another*) *Roll the DVD*)

E) MY Point is The suffering is transformed into a Blessing !!!

Jesus is with us in the trial and Jesus uses the trial in our lives!

A) Notice something in V.25 – Nebuchadnezzar says I see 4 men loose in the Fire

B) Note this – they didn't lose their hair – they didn't lose their clothes - their beards –

C) They lost their bonds – the ropes that bound them

Trials result is freedom – We are loosed.

A) We lose those things that bound us – Pride / Selfishness / Self-Confidence

B) We lose those things and we gain a greater sense of who God is

1) **We gain a greater sense of what he wants to do in our lives**

C) Gain a greater sense of Dependency in our time of weakness

1) **Greater sense of who He is**

D) And our lives become an opportunity for God to show his strength

1) **Platform – God is glorified**

E) Exactly what happens here.

Read v.28-30

²⁸ Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God! ²⁹ Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this.”

³⁰ Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.

Ironic – **“The mighty king who ordered the world to bow before his image now bows before the king of the world!”** (Swindoll)

God is Praised

First he's going to kill them, now he's going to kill anyone who insults their God.

They were promoted!

Instead of frying in the furnace, they are now helping run the king's empire.

That's a good reward for three young men who refused to bow down - Refused to Bend –

God refused to let them Burn!