Sermon Title: “Feeling the Heat: Trusting God in the Midst of the Fire (Part 2)”

Scripture Passage: Daniel 3:26-30

**Introduction**

 Good morning! I hope that all of you are doing well and have been able to heal and recover over the past week. Today we are concluding this 2-part message addressing the topic of trials and how our God walks with us through the trials we face in this life. The section of Scripture we are looking at today is Daniel 3 verses 26-30. The three men have already been thrown into the furnace, have been seen to be surviving the harsh flames and have also been seen to have a fourth figure with them in the fire. What we will be discussing today is the result of this event and the overall impact it will have on King Nebuchadnezzar, the kingdom of Babylon and finally the other Hebrews who are spending time in exile at this time.

 Let us take a moment to review the context of this Scripture. What has just happened is that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego have refused to worship the golden statue that the king had erected. Since they refused when they were first interrogated their refusal was proven to the king when he personally asked them. After this they were thrown into the fiery furnace after it had been made seven times hotter. The king was so angry with the men because of their fierce refusal to comply and also because they had been treated so well by him. As we begin verse 26 the men are already in the furnace and the fourth figure has been witnessed. The men will be removed from the furnace and the king will share with them his thoughts on what he had just seen take place.

 The theme for today’s message is that God has the power to save His faithful ones from trials. Just as we have already said in previous messages, God’s people are not promised lives that are free from trials, but what we are promised is that God will be with us as we face those trials. As we will see in the Scripture today, the way that a follower of Christ handles such trials has a huge impact on other believers as well as non-believers. Let us begin today by reading Daniel 3:26-30 together:

**26 “Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the furnace of blazing fire; he said, ‘Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, come out, you servants of the Most High God, and come here!’ Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the middle of the fire. 27 The satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king’s counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men, nor was the hair of their heads singed, nor were their trousers damaged, nor had even the smell of fire touched them.**

**28 Nebuchadnezzar responded and said, ‘Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent His angel and rescued His servants who put their trust in Him, violating the king’s command, and surrendered their bodies rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. 29 Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or population of any language that speaks anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses made a rubbish heap, because there is no other god who is able to save in this way.’ 30 Then the king made Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego prosperous in the province of Babylon.”**

I. The Deliverance of the Faithful (Daniel 3:26-27)

A. God's Faithfulness in the Fire (v. 26)

Nebuchadnezzar calls the three men out of the furnace after seeing that they are unharmed. What the king says to the men is that he recognizes that they are servants of the most-high God. This tells us that immediately the king understood that they had been blessed by God which led to them being saved by Him. The king does not open up the door due to the strength of the fire, so he asks the men to come out to him.

**Application: God is present in our trials, and He never abandons His people.**

B. Witness to God's Power (v. 27)

The officials saw that the fire had not harmed them. This verse provides us with the evidence of this miracle having been witnessed by all of the officials of the kingdom. This was not a fabricated story made up to give the people false hope. Rather, God allowed this to take place in front of several witnesses so that there would be no doubt that the miracle had taken place. In addition to the word of the witnesses, we see again that the clothing of the men was not damaged in any way. This is a follow-up to the fact we had provided for us last week in verse 21 that the men were thrown into the furnace with all of their clothing on. Their faith in God was proven stronger than the fire's heat. This fact remains true for us even when we are caught in the fires of compromise in the culture today. When we are faced with a dilemma where we are asked to neglect our beliefs to satisfy the culture, we do not have to worry that God will leave us on our own to face the fire. When we stand on our convictions the Holy Spirit will guide us with the words and the courage to withstand the pressure knowing that when we stand on the Word of God we will be supported by our God.

**Application: Our trials can serve as a testimony to God's greatness and power when we remain faithful.**

II. The Authority of God Over All (Daniel 3:28-29)

*A. Nebuchadnezzar’s Praise (v. 28)*

Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges the power of God, praising Him for saving the three men. Just as we saw after Daniel explained and interpreted the king’s dream, we see King Nebuchadnezzar praising the God of heaven for His power. The last time we saw this statement of faith we concluded that the king really did not know who God was, but he at least did have respect for Him. This time we see the same attitude, but the men are praised for their unwillingness to serve any gods other than the God of Israel. Standing in faith sets a great example for other believers as well as non-believers because through that conviction those people will come to respect God even more.

**Application: Even unbelievers will recognize God's sovereignty when they see His power in action.** These three men, through their conviction, provide a confident example for others making the people realize that God had not forgotten about them. He is always with us, even in the tough times.

*B. A Decree of Worship (v. 29)*

Nebuchadnezzar issues a decree that anyone who speaks against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego will be punished. This warning of punishment echoes what the king said he would do to those who were unable to explain his dream to them. When reading verse 29 carefully we see that the king does not stop worshiping the false gods of Babylon, but he does make a decree saying that anyone who spoke evil of the God of Israel would be severely punished. The king does, however, state that there is no other God who has the ability to save the way that the God of Israel does. The king does have a respect for the God of Israel and we see that in his words. We will learn, however, that the respect he has for God will be short lived and he will once again forget his praises very quickly.

**Application: Our faith can impact society, leading to respect for God's sovereignty.** In the previous verse we spoke about the power that a follower of God has when they show that in the witness of others. Let us not forget the words of Jesus who taught the importance of our actions and how they reflect our relationship with Him. **“Your light must shine before people in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).**

III. The Reward of Faithful Obedience (Daniel 3:30)

*A. Promotion in the Kingdom*

The king promotes Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to higher positions in the province of Babylon. Verse 30 tells us that because of the faith of these men they are once again given positions of honor in the kingdom and rewarded for their faith.

**Application: Faithfulness to God, even in difficult circumstances, often leads to God's blessing and promotion.**

*B. God Honors Faithfulness*

God honors those who remain true to Him, even when faced with persecution or danger. We see these promises provided for us both in the Old and the New Testaments. However, we need to be careful not to misinterpret what God’s word says regarding trials and the way these are used to help followers of Christ to mature in their faith.

**Application: Trusting in God's plan, even in adversity, will result in His rewards.** These rewards are not always earthly. Jesus Christ told the disciples that they all would suffer for His name, but because of that suffering they would be rewarded many times more in the kingdom of heaven. One such example is provided for us in **Mark 10:29-31 “Jesus said, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel’s sake, 30 but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last, first.”** There is an eternal reward for those who give up things in this world for the kingdom of God. The greatest reward is eternal life, which surpasses anything that this world might have to offer.

DQ: What does the Bible teach regarding protecting followers of Christ?

 In our discussion last week there was a very good question asked that I wanted to take a few moments to address. The question was this this: If the Bible promises protection and healing for those who are faithful to God then why do those who follow Christ have so much trouble and suffering in their lives? If I do what God says, then why am I suffering? I want to answer this question as clearly as possible. What we first need to understand is that when God is promising deliverance to the people of Israel in the Old Testament, He was providing these promises to those specific people in those circumstances. One such example is Noah who was saved because he had the faith to build the ark after God had warned him regarding the flood. God’s promise to spare Noah and his family was a specific promise to him and then through him God blessed all those who would come after him. There are also many other ways that God physically protected His people in the OT. He did this through angels, by providing judges, through royal decrees like King Nebuchadnezzar decreed in our passage today and through using other nations to carry out His will. God protected His people in many different ways and this was done to prove His power. Even though God protected His people several times there were also occasions where He did not intervene to save His people. Why is that the case? Why does God not always physically protect His people and sometimes allow them to be persecuted or even killed for their faith? Under the new covenant in Jesus Christ, we are not promised that we will be protected from every calamity and that we should expect there to be times of trial in our lives. The reason why we are not protected from all calamities is because we live in a fallen world that has been corrupted by sin. This world right now belongs to Satan because God is allowing him to travel through the earth and tempt man to rebel against God. Even though this is the case, God has not left us powerless to stand up to Satan. The Apostle Paul teaches that God has equipped us with the spiritual armor so that we may be equipped to take the fight to Satan (Ephesians 6:10-18) **“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist on the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand firm therefore, having belted your waist with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having strapped on your feet the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”** God has also given us the gift of His Holy Spirit dwelling in us to guide us as we walk in the ways of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:22). What we learn as we read Scripture is that even though we will face trials, persecution and suffering, we face these things looking forward to our eternal reward. God does not always protect us from all trials, but He goes through those with us and reminds us that we are looking forward to the day when we will be in His presence for all eternity. The woes we face in this world are but an instant when compared to the glory we will experience for eternity.

 When you are feeling overwhelmed and think that God has forgotten you look to the cross. Jesus Christ dying on the cross for our salvation proves that God knows what we are going through and that He hurts with us while we suffer (John 16:33). Our God chose to endure the worst death imaginable because He loves us and wanted to show us that love by laying down His life. No matter what we face in this world, we must remember that we serve a God who sacrificed Himself for us before we could ever love Him. Let us not think about all of the negatives we face in life more than all of the blessings that the Lord has showered us with. He gave us life and because of His grace He will allow us to be in His presence forever not because we deserve it, but because He is a loving and gracious God. May we live in victory knowing that the curse of sin is defeated and that our God wants us to be with Him forever.