Trust Under Pressure
Daniel 3
November 1st, 2026

1. Decree #1: Everyone must _____ the golden image (3:1-7)

2. A jealous _____ and the sentence of death (3:8-15)

3. A faithful _____ and rescue from death (3:16-27)

4. Decree #2: No one can speak _____ the God of Israel (3:28-30)

5. Applying the Word
   a. Have you _____ ahead of time to worship and obey the Lord whatever pressure there may be?
   b. Have you _____ in Jesus for a far greater deliverance?

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on Daniel 3

1. What are some common ways that Christians today experience pressure to join with others in a way that disobeys or dishonors the Lord?

2. How does the dream and its interpretation in Daniel 2 lead to the events of chapter 3?

3. What are the things that are repeated throughout the chapter? What is the effect of that repetition?

4. Why is it significant that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were willing to trust and obey the Lord "even if" He didn't rescue them? How can we apply that to trials and difficulties that we may face?

5. Compare the endings of Daniel 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6. What common themes do you see? What is that intended to teach about God and His faithfulness?

6. What can we learn from Daniel 3 that can help us develop the convictions and character to obey the Lord even under pressure?
   a. Why is it often too late to develop our convictions in the moment of truth?

7. How does Christ's perfect, permanent faithfulness encourage you to repent where needed, and motivate you to remain faithful today?

Trust Under Pressure
Daniel 3
November 1st, 2026

Big idea: God's people must not worship anything or anyone but God, even under immense pressure.

Intro

There's a famous photo that was taken at a Nazi rally in Germany in 1936. It shows a sea of people raising their arms to salute Hitler but one man conspicuously refusing to salute.

Historians are almost certain that the man's name was August Landmesser. In 1935 he was engaged to be married to Irma Eckler when the Nazi party passed the Nuremberg Laws forbidding their marriage. Irma was Jewish and so August was forbidden to marry her. They continued their relationship in defiance of the law and attempted to flee the country but were unsuccessful. They were arrested in 1938 and separated. August was released in 1941 but Irma never made it out of the concentration camp. The was killed in 1942.

We recognize and respect bravery in the face of pressure in historical hindsight. But it can be more difficult to practice it in our own lives. We find reasons to justify compromise. The lines seem more fuzzy. We're fearful.

Sometimes however we know the right thing to do but we lack the motivation.

In Daniel 3 we find one of the most famous stories in the Bible. It's a story in which the main characters refuse to bow down to an idol even though everyone around them is and they are under immense pressure. Their faithfulness and God's deliverance should motivate us to follow Christ when we're under pressure to just give in.

One of the literary features of these chapter is repetition. Listen for it as we read and consider why it uses repetition and why these particular things are repeated.

1. Decree #1: Everyone must ***worship*** the golden image (3:1-7)
    a. We don't know how much time has elapsed since chapter 2.
        i. We know it is after the events of chapter 2 because Shadrack, Meshach, and Abednego are serving as government administrators over Babylon, which they were appointed to at the end of chapter 2.
        ii. Some tradition places it 20 years later, but it isn't definitive.
    b. Neb. made a massive gold statue – image.
        i. 60 cubits by 6 cubits – 90 ft by 9 ft – tall and skinny – the same proportions as the Washington Monument.
        ii. It's likely gold overlaid on wood and may have been on top of a pedestal.
        iii. It's as if he is playing up the statue from his dream in chapter 2.
            1. I'm the head of gold? More like an entire statue of gold!
            2. Repeated 10 times is a reference that Neb. was the one who made this image.
                a. It was his idea, his initiative.
                b. When the three men refused to bow, it is said to Neb. that they disregarded YOU (v. 12).
                c. Davis - There's also a cumulative mockery in the repetition. What are they supposed to bow down to? This metal image made by a man! It's a fearful trial, but also kind of silly at the same time.

c. For this royal ceremony, all the big names and important people were expected to come. Everyone who is everyone is supposed to be there. (repeated twice and then a third time in the end)

d. A big band is assembled (repeated four times)

e. They are told that when they hear the music, they are to (1) fall down and (2) worship the golden image. (repeated 6 times and 3 more times as serve and worship)

   i. They were polytheistic and believed that the fate of nations reflected the power of their gods. So if Babylon conquered these other nations, the Babylonian gods must be the strongest. The people could worship their own gods if they wanted, but they should have no problem acknowledging the Babylonian gods as supreme. These people of every nation should be able to do that. Therefore, it was a great offense when the Jews refused.

   ii. You can still keep your own gods and worship them! Just bow down to this image also.

f. The consequence of disobedience – death by the fiery furnace.

g. The music played and ALL the peoples, nations, and men of every language bowed down.

   i. But not all…

2. A jealous ***accusation*** and the sentence of death (3:8-15)

   a. Certain Chaldeans accuse three Jewish men of refusing to worship the golden image (3:8-12)

      i. I say a jealous accusation because they bring up "these are the guys you appointed over the administration" where as the Chaldeans were usually seen as the elite.

      ii. It could be reading in to it, but it explains why they were functioning as grown up tattle-tales.

      iii. Three accusations –

         1. They have disregarded you

         2. They do not serve your gods

         3. They do not worship the golden image

   b. Neb. sentenced them to death if they did not worship the golden image (3:13-15)

      i. Neb. responds with rage and anger and ordered the men to be brought in.

      ii. He, very generously, gives them another opportunity to just do the right thing and bow down when you hear the music.

   c. Pressure

      i. From authority – Neb. the king 6 times in vv. 1-7

      ii. From conformity – civil service folks told and threatened – band plays – all the people in the crowd bow down – tremendous pressure

      iii. From malice – Chaldeans (8-12)

      iv. From intimidation – towering rage of a monarch (13-15)

   d. Neb. sets up the drama of God's rescue.

      i. "What god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?"

         1. "I'm most powerful. No god can stop me. Don't you realize I have the power to end your life?"

      ii. Set up for God to do what only God can do.

iii. similar to Rabshakeh in Isaiah – what god is there that is stronger than me?

1. **Isaiah 36:18-20** '*Beware* that Hezekiah does not mislead you, saying, "The LORD will deliver us." Has any one of the gods of the nations delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? [19] 'Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? And when have they delivered Samaria from my hand? [20] 'Who among all the gods of these lands have delivered their land from my hand, that the LORD would deliver Jerusalem from my hand?'"

3. A faithful ***profession*** and rescue from death (3:16-27)

a. They refuse, whether God rescues them or not (3:16-18)

i. "O Nebuchadnezzar" – fairly bold – compare that to the Chaldean "O King, live forever!"

1. Neb. needs to learn his place.
2. He's a man who God placed in a position of leadership. But he's just a man.
3. You're an individual. You're a mortal.

ii. For centuries part of the funeral service for deceased royals in Austria included the "Knocking ceremony" and they still do today, as they did when Archduke Otto von Habsburg, the official Crown Prince of the Austro-Hungarian empire, died in 2011.

1. The 1st Knock: The MC listed a dizzying array of noble lineage spanning dozens of historic regions: "Otto of Austria, once Crown Prince of Austria-Hungary, Prince Royal of Hungary and Bohemia… Princely Count of Habsburg and Tyrol…"
    a. The monk inside replied: "We know him not!"
2. The 2nd Knock: The titles were stripped away and replaced with his extensive modern, democratic achievements: "Dr. Otto von Habsburg, President of the International Paneuropean Union, Member and Senior Chair of the European Parliament, holder of numerous honorary doctorates…"
    a. The monk: "We know him not!"
3. The 3rd Knock: The MC finally said: "Your brother, Otto, a mortal, sinful man."
    a. The monk replied: "Then let him enter."

iii. God is very kind to Nebuchadnezzar.

1. Chapters 2-4 record ways in which God is getting his attention, giving evidence, pushing him towards humility and self-recognition.
2. Chapter 4 will be the most prominent.
3. His great pride is the monument that needs to be toppled.

iv. V. 16b is essentially, we don't need more time to give you an answer. We don't need another opportunity. Our convictions are set and planted.

1. We can only respond this way in the moment when our convictions are resolved and refined in advance.

v. God is able to deliver us, but even if He doesn't, we won't bow.

1. We don't know what our God will do, O king, but it doesn't matter. We won't serve your gods.

2. Davis: They were unsure of God's circumstantial will (whether they will escape) but they were sure of God's revealed will (you shall have no other gods besides me).
    a. What matters for them is not deliverance but obedience.
    b. Fully balanced picture of faith: faith knows the power of God (he is able, 17), guards the freedom of God (but if not…, 18a), and holds the truth of God (we will not serve your gods, 18b).
3. We don't know what God will do in a situation that is causing us fear and worry, where we are wracked by "what if's."
    a. But we can change that "what if" to "even if."
    b. Even if the worst happens, what then?
        i. I entrust myself to the Lord
        ii. I know I'll be with Him
        iii. I know He can use it for good

vi. One author said of this scene, "that there are three men who do not worship in Neb. totalitarian state, is a miracle of God. That the three were not devoured by the fire is no greater miracle. Suppose the fiery furnace *had* consumed them. The real miracle would have happened just the same."

b. The fiery furnace and miraculous rescue (3:19-27)
    i. Neb. matches the fiery furnace – he gets hotter and hotter – he's filled with wrath.
    ii. What was this furnace like?
        1. Very hot – killed the men who carried them up
        2. They went up to it – had a ramp to the top
        3. Large enough for 4 men
        4. Neb and others could see into it
    iii. The king saw some things that didn't make sense
        1. 4 men instead of 3
        2. Walking instead of tied up
        3. Not harmed instead of burning up
    iv. The fourth man – like a son of the gods, God sent "His angel"
        1. I don't think we're mean to take Neb. labels as necessarily theologically precise.
        2. Most believe this is a theophany, a manifestation of God's presence, specifically that it is Jesus, the second member of the Trinity who is there with them.
            a. We can't say for sure, but I believe that's the best answer.
        3. Certainly, the promise of God is His presence, even in hardship and maybe especially in hardship.
            a. **Isaiah 43:2** "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, Nor will the flame burn you.

b. **Matthew 28:20** teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

v. Miraculously, they not only survived, they had no evidence of the fire upon them. (v. 27)

4. Decree #2: No one can speak ***against*** the God of Israel (3:28-30)
    a. Neb. recognizes that the men:
        i. Put their trust in God
        ii. Violated the king's command
        iii. Even gave up their bodies to be burned in the process rather than worship any god except their own God
            1. When someone commands us to do what God forbids or forbids us to do what God commands, our responsibility is to obey God.
        iv. And God rescued them! Even though Neb. had raised the question, "what god is there that can deliver you?"
            1. *This* God. A fake god couldn't. But the real God did. He didn't have to. The men still trusted him even if it wouldn't have ended so well.
    b. New decree, also with a death sentence for violating:
        i. He doesn't say for everyone to worship this God instead, but he does make it a crime to speak against this God, which is progress in Babylon.
        ii. But God isn't done with Neb. yet. The next chapter has more.
5. Applying the Word
    a. Have you ***resolved*** ahead of time to worship and obey the Lord whatever pressure there may be?
    b. Have you ***trusted*** in Jesus for a far greater deliverance?
        i. This mini-rescues are just pictures of the great rescue.
            1. Israel from Egypt, these friends from the furnace, these are both just glimpses of the greater rescue that we need.
        ii. The encouragement by example from this passage is to be like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.
        iii. The reality by our experience is that we are often not like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.
            1. So, what then?
            2. Remember that Jesus obeyed, all the way to the point of death (Phil. 2).
            3. Jesus had an opportunity to worship someone else when the devil tempted Him in Matt. 4 and He refused.
            4. The wages of sin is death – what we deserve from our cowardice is death – but His death is our death by faith in Him. So that what we get instead of death is grace.
        iv. That's what allows us to truly turn "what if" to "even if."







1. Decree #1: Everyone must ***worship*** the golden image (3:1-7)

2. A jealous ***accusation*** and the sentence of death (3:8-15)

Isaiah 36:18-20 '*Beware* that Hezekiah does not mislead you, saying, "The LORD will deliver us." Has any one of the gods of the nations delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? 19 'Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim?

Isaiah 36:18-20 And when have they delivered Samaria from my hand? 20 'Who among all the gods of these lands have delivered their land from my hand, that the LORD would deliver Jerusalem from my hand?'"

3. A faithful ***profession*** and rescue from death (3:16-27)

Isaiah 43:2 "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, Nor will the flame burn you.

Matthew 28:20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

4. Decree #2: No one can speak ***against*** the God of Israel (3:28-30)

5. Applying the Word

a. Have you ***resolved*** ahead of time to worship and obey the Lord whatever pressure there may be?

b. Have you ***trusted*** in Jesus for a far greater deliverance?