

Lesson 23 – Daniel 1-3

The book of Daniel offers both great examples of living a life of faith as well as many prophecies - some of them are the most important prophecies regarding the timing of the arrival of the Messiah – both the first and second time. It also unlocks and provides answers to things brought up in Revelation. Daniel wrote this book around 600 B.C., and the majority of his prophecies have been fulfilled. Fulfilled Bible prophecies is one of the most important demonstrations of the inerrancy of the Word of God, so for Bible naysayers, the only possible attacks available to these fulfilled truths is that it was really written in 50 A.D. – after the timing of the fulfilled prophecies - which would make Daniel's prophecies a fraud.

The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, was written in 285 B.C., and the book of Daniel was in it then, so how was it not written until 50 A.D.? There are other examples to prove the truth of the timing of Daniel writing this, but let's go straight the horse's, or should I say lion's, mouth – Jesus. In His Olivet discourse about the end times in Matthew 24 and Luke 21, the Lord quoted often from Daniel. If Jesus is certain that Daniel's writings are authentic, then that is good enough for me.

As I just said, fulfilled prophecies from Scripture demonstrate the inerrancy of the Word of God. What should that mean to us? It should fortify, or build up, our faith. Let's face it, God isn't physically visible – His creation is, His love is, His grace is, His mercy is, His power is, and I could go on and on – but because we're weak and fickle, not being able to see God or that He doesn't rescue us from every single pain or difficulty, being absolutely certain that there is a God can be a challenge at times. I'm from Missouri, which is known as the "Show Me" state, so imagine the challenges I go through every day!!! I want God to prove Himself all the time!! Here's the glorious answer – He does! That's why fulfilled prophecy is such a key component to building up the foundations of our faith.

Have you ever thought of or have been asked who do you want to see when you get to heaven? I would hope the first person that comes to mind is Jesus, but I would guess also high on the list will be family members and friends who have gone before you. For me, Daniel is high on my list. This was an extraordinary man of faith. Ezekiel was a contemporary, and he mentions Daniel in the same sentence with Job and Noah as examples of great men of faith. Additionally, Daniel is one of the few key figures in the Old Testament where there is no mention of sinful conduct. This does not mean he did not sin – he was a human, and the Bible tells us that there is no one righteous, no not one. What this does mean is he walked the walk. He lived for what, or I should say Who, he loved. He purposed His life for Whom he praised.

So the book starts mentioning Daniel's writing this in the third year of the reign of one of Judah's bad kings, Jehoiakim, so we're at about 605 B.C. This is the dude who, when receiving a scroll of prophecy from Jeremiah, chopped it up and threw it in the fire. This is also the time where King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon besieged Jerusalem and took Jehoiakim and the people into Babylonian captivity.

I think it is noteworthy to point out a key phrase Daniel inserts into verse 1:2(a) "And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his (meaning Nebuchadnezzar's) hand." Whether it is politicians, prominent people from the entertainment world, titans of business, or even any of us, whenever success comes our way, if we attempt to take credit or grab the glory for the success, this verse should be the reminder that EVERYTHING that happens in our lives is coming through the fingertips of the Lord. You know how you pick up soft sand in your hand and then as you slowly separate your fingers the sand starts to filter out – who is controlling the stream of sand falling from your hand? You are. So it goes with the Lord and His control of the blessings and our circumstances in our lives.

I don't know about you, but I'm amazed at how much time I spend each day doing things under the assumption I have control over what is going on in my life. The only thing I can truly control is my actions – and that is **ONLY** with the power of the Holy Spirit. Without the strength of the Spirit overwhelming my fleshly responses to things, I would be anything but in control – I would likely be *out* of control. The idea that we're not in control is something most of us don't want to hear. Why do we want to be in control? I would propose the core answer is a lack of trust and faith in God's willingness and ability to appropriately manage our lives. The fruit of that lack of faith and trust is fear. Please don't think I'm trying to lay a condemning trip on any of you – you can put me in this category.

One of my favorite names of God is Jehovah Jireh – the Lord provides. What does this name of God imply? That He will provide EVERYTHING we need – no exceptions. That's not easy for us to believe is it? Why? When we surrender our wills to our flesh, which is diametrically opposed to the things of the Spirit – we are at war within ourselves as our flesh is the enemy to the Spirit that dwells in each believer of Jesus. Our flesh wants what it wants and wants it now! I can remember when Vickie was pregnant – we became such regular visitors to Dairy Queen we were on a first name basis with the people working there! I could blame it on Vickie's cravings because she was pregnant, but I'll be honest and say I was picking up the keys to the car just as much, if not more, than when she was wanting a big soft-serve chocolate cone. For me it was the Heath Bar Blizzard or a Peanut Buster Parfait!

It isn't just the food cravings of our flesh that we war against – it is also the fear of pain. Anyone here like pain? What do we want the most when we're in pain? For it to go away, right? Pain comes in many types such as grief, sadness, depression, and loneliness and from many places including poor health, the loss of a loved one, the breaking up of a relationship, the loss of a job, etc. Regardless of

how many types of pain there are or how many different ways we can experience it, they all have one thing in common – they hurt, and we want to make the pain go away. If we seek God to take it away, and He does, then we're happy and praising Him; however, if He doesn't take away the pain, then we wonder if He's really there or if He cares about what we're going through.

I'm going to wrap up this lecture with more on this topic, but verse 2 clearly states that Nebuchadnezzar did not take Jehoiakim – the *Lord* delivered him into his hands. God is in control all the time.

So, in addition to taking Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar takes some of the temple treasures and the picks of the litters of young Jewish men, keeps them celibate, and preps them for service to himself. Among these men were Daniel, Hananiah (aka Shadrach), Mishael (aka Meshach), and Azariah (aka Abed-nego). Daniel is presented with his first test of obedience to what he believes – he's offered a portion of the king's meat and wine but fearing it might be sacrificed to idols, he goes vegan. The prince of the eunuchs doesn't like this vegan thing and fears Daniel's determination to not eat the king's meat will make him weak and less effective, and that will make the prince look bad and put him in danger.

Daniel challenges the prince for 10 days to let he and his three buddies eat their sticks and twigs and then compare their appearances to those who are feasting on Whoppers (you know, Burger *King's* meat?). At the end of ten days, Daniel and his buddies looked great, but the rest of the eunuchs looked like anyone who ate Whoppers for 10 days. The prince agrees to no longer push the king's meat and wine on Daniel.

The Lord honored and blessed Daniel and his buddies for their faithfulness by giving them knowledge and understanding in all kinds of literature and learning. Daniel is also given understanding of dreams of all kinds. The four musketeers are

then presented to the King, and he finds them 10 times better than all the magicians and enchanters in the kingdom.

We need to be clear about scenarios like this where we see or hear people who stand up for their faith getting rewarded by God. God does not owe us anything when we demonstrate our faith in a tangible way. That would imply God's love is conditional, and, therefore, we need to perform to earn God's blessing. That is NOT how it works with God.

Anyone here ever been to Niagara Falls? Here is a picture. They are awesome – the amount of water that pours out constantly is truly amazing. Now, imagine this water is God's blessings. The waters don't stop and start based on God's opinions of our behavior – they're always pouring out – remember, God doesn't change. It's only when we choose to stand for our faith and draw closer to God that we get to experience the power of these ever flowing blessings. It's not *God* turning on and off – it is *our* decisions to draw close to and obey Him that we see the greater blessings. See the boat in the picture? When it is at its dock, the impact of the awesomeness of the falls isn't nearly as great as when it draws closer to them.

So Daniel and his buddies are taking a stand for godliness – in essence, drawing closer to God out of faith, they experienced the blessings of knowledge and understanding that were always there for the taking from God. I was taught from an early age that I needed to perform to earn the favor of my parents – if I got good grades or did well in sports, they were clearly more willing to offer love and encouragement. However, when I didn't perform – even though I would try my hardest – they would discipline me for my lack of performance. I'm just now starting to realize that is not how God works, and I can tell you it is a liberating sensation to know God loves me for who I am right now – He can't love me any more now than He did the day I came into His thoughts to be created. The

waterfalls of His love for you and for me never stop – we just need to choose how much we want to get closer to Him.

Matthew 7:11 sums up this point well, “If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!” We want to give things to those we love – our family members and friends, but God wants to give so much more. He took the first step proving it to us with sending His Son to die on a cross on our behalf because of our sin. He won’t stop there. Praise the LORD!

Bible scholars estimate that Daniel and his friends were about 15 at this point in the story. I don’t know about you, but when I see young people demonstrating their faith, I am simply in awe of them. I think about how different my life might have been had I come to know the Lord at such an early age. I can think of no greater ministry each of us can have but to offer the wisdom and love God has poured out on us to young people we know – our children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, or to kids in Sunday school. There is no greater way for us to fight back the evil tide of turning generation after generation away from their faiths than for us to instill in young people the deepest truths of Who God is and exhibiting agape, or unconditional, love to give them a glimpse of a Christ-centered and Christ-like relationship.

Chapter 2 is considered to be the backbone of Bible prophecy as it unlocks the rest of the prophecies in this book and then unlocks the prophecies in the Book of Revelation. The chapter begins with the whole story of King Nebuchadnezzar having nightmares, and he wants his platoon of Whopper eaters and astrologers to not just tell him what the dreams mean but to tell him their content. They try to get him to tell them the content of the dream, but when they realize he won’t they finally tell the truth in verse 11, “What the king asks is too difficult. No one can reveal it to the king except the gods, and they do not live among humans.”

When we confess our faith in Jesus, we are born again by the power of the Holy Spirit, and one of the things that are unveiled to us is the truth that there is another realm in this world – the spirit world. It is unknown to those who don't believe, and, for most of us, it is a mysterious world to those of us who believe. Personally, I don't like spending much time on the demonic parts of the spirit world as I choose to focus on what the Bible says and rely on God's power to guide me through it. However, we need to understand that there is a spirit world, and it is partly occupied by evil spirits. More importantly, we must understand that they are limited and no match for the godly-based spirits.

Astrologers, palm readers, fortune-tellers and the such are drawing their powers from the evil spirit realm. However, these powers are limited, and the astrologers are acknowledging this truth in verse 11. This is not the case with those of us who have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us. Jesus said in Matthew 19:26, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." This is an important verse for us to remember as we establish the foundation of our faith in Jesus. The impossible situations in our lives are indeed impossible if we're to rely on our own understanding and wisdom to resolve them. The same is the case for evil spirits – they love to create scenarios in our lives to cause us to lose faith in God's character and His power to heal these scenarios. The evil spirits' hope is to target our weaknesses and cause doubt, fear, depression, anger, and anything else that draws us farther and farther away from those never-ending powerful waterfalls of blessings that are rooted in goodness for us. With God, ALL things are possible.

So Nebuchadnezzar is none too happy with his team's inability to tell him his dream and what it means, and orders all of them – including Daniel and his buddies – to be killed. Daniel steps in and asks for a little time and then to be allowed to approach the king. He goes back to his house and tells his buddies about the challenge before them. No doubt, these four young men had one serious prayer

meeting that night as they were praying for their lives. Jon Courson said it well, “Nebuchadnezzar took his problems to bed, Daniel took his to God – and what a difference that makes.” Again, God all the time had the answer to Nebuchadnezzar – it wasn’t until Daniel and his gang drew closer to the Lord that they received what they needed.

Daniel’s response to this dream and its meaning being revealed is an important one and worth reading out loud. Beginning in verse 20, “Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his. ²¹ He changes times and seasons; he deposes kings and raises up others. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning. ²² He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him. ²³ I thank and praise you, God of my ancestors: You have given me wisdom and power, you have made known to me what we asked of you, you have made known to us the dream of the king.”

What was his response to God’s blessing? Praise and thanksgiving. This should come naturally but, sadly, it doesn’t. Remember the story of the ten men who had leprosy asking the Lord to have pity on them? He healed them all, but how many of them gave Him thanks for what He did? Just one. Vickie and I have been talking a lot lately about the importance of praising and thanking God ALL the time. Ephesians 5:20 exhorts us to be, “always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The Apostle Paul doesn’t say to thank God ‘sometimes’ or only when we get our way. Praise is not an acronym that means, Please Respond Specifically As I Expected. What are the words Paul uses that tell us how often and when we’re to thank God? We’re to thank Him always and for everything.

That’s not easy is it? You’re not yet healed. You don’t have that new job. Your relationship still is the pits. Your kids are still far from the Lord. How are we expected to praise and thank God when things aren’t better? Let’s take another

look at Daniel's expressions of praise and thanksgiving. What do we see him doing here? Is he specifically praising God for what He has done? Not completely – what he's doing here for the most part is praising God for Who He is – not so much for what He has done. Since God doesn't change, then all of His goodness, all of His mercy, all of His compassion, all of His love are worthy to be praised – regardless of our circumstances. God isn't changing – remember the waterfalls? It is us who change in our opinion of Who God is when our circumstances get painful. Some of you may have heard the saying "If you're not feeling close to God, who moved?"

Daniel does give thanks to God for revealing the dream and its meaning, and he is given an audience with Nebuchadnezzar. You have to love and admire the boldness of this young man. He could have puffed out his chest and proclaimed to the king, "**I** figured it out!" and taken credit for what God had revealed to him. No, Daniel humbles himself takes a step back and then gives God the glory in verse 28, "but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries." Jon Courson again nails it when he says, "the fastest way to see the work of God through your life stopped is to begin to think it's because you're special."

Upon acknowledging God is the one who revealed to him the content of the dream, Daniel proceeds to describe an enormous dazzling statue with a head made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, and its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. He then speaks of a rock – not made by human hands – smashing the feet made of iron and clay, which would ultimately cause the entire statue to crumble. Then the rock that struck the statue would become a huge mountain and fill the whole earth. No wonder Nebuchadnezzar was terrified – this was a pretty freaky dream!

Beginning in verse 36, Daniel begins to interpret the dream. What he is about to unravel is a prophecy of the major kingdoms that will come into existence for the remainder of human history. Starting with the head of gold, this represented

the Babylonian empire. Notice the declining quality of the metals in this statue.

The head was made of gold, and the Babylonian empire is considered to have had a greater effect on the known world than any other empire.

Next, Daniel speaks of an inferior empire, and this is to mean the kingdom of the Medes and Persians. This empire would overthrow the Babylonians in 530 B.C. The two arms of silver acknowledged this kingdom would be a constitutional monarchy as opposed to the Babylonian empire, which was an absolute monarchy.

The Kingdom of Ancient Greece would overthrow the Medo-Persian Empire in 330 B.C. This part of the statue was brass or bronze, and brass is a lesser metal than gold or silver – this lesser metal signified that the Greek kingdom was an oligarchy.

The Roman Empire is the legs of iron, and it took over the Greek kingdom in 168 B.C. The Roman Empire was a limited democracy, so it was even a weaker kingdom – despite its efforts to crush everything in its path into bloody submission.

We need to remember that prophecy has to do with the Nation of Israel, so in A.D. 70 when the Romans annihilated Israel, the prophetic clock was put on hold. That clock didn't start ticking again until 1948 when Israel once again became a nation and was put back in its land. Now, we can assess the final kingdom as symbolized as the feet of iron and clay – this will be the last world power.

As Daniel describes this final power, it will be a tenuous alliance – it will be a divided power. Many Bible scholars believe this final power will be a version of a restored Roman Empire. It will be this empire that will face the crushing rock, the rock of our Salvation, the chief cornerstone – it will be Jesus, and He will crush this final empire and usher in the Millennium and rule and reign.

Nebuchadnezzar is blown away at the accuracy and awesomeness of Daniel's interpretation, and utters these important words, "Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery." Notice Nebuchadnezzar doesn't accept God as his God when he tells Daniel it is your God that is the God of gods. We need to make our relationship with God personal in order to receive the fullness of what Jesus purchased for us with His blood at the cross. He is not just the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob or the God of the Bible – He's not some mysterious, unknowable God who is aloof and uninterested in us. He is my God. He is your God – He wants our relationships with Him to be deeply personal – for us to share with Him everything we're thinking and feeling - so He can heal what has been harmed and restore what has been lost. That's what close friends should be – someone we can trust and someone who cares more about us than his/her self. That is Who God is.

Nebuchadnezzar promotes Daniel to a position of leadership over the entire province of Babylon and in charge of all the wise men. Daniel gets Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego to become administrators over the providence of Babylon. Life is good – for now.

Twenty years later, Nebuchadnezzar's humble utterance of Daniel's God is a mere memory, and he is feeling his oats. He erects a 90' high statue of gold – notice the entire statue is gold – not just the head like the one in his dream. This is his way of saying his kingdom would last forever. He then calls in all the key people in his kingdom to come to the dedication of this statue and, when the music plays, they are to bow down and worship the image. Those who don't will be put into a fiery furnace.

The Chaldeans, which in modern English means "tattle-tails", snitch on Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego and tell Nebuchadnezzar they were not complying with his order to bow down and worship the statue. The king flips his

lid and orders them to be brought before him. He restates the directive to them and confirms their punishment should they not obey it. And then he waves this line at them at the end of verse 15, and can't you hear these words coming out of Satan's mouth himself, "Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?"

Because of their faith, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are being persecuted. Jesus said in Matthew 10:22a, "You will be hated by everyone because of me". He doesn't say 'you *may* be hated' or 'you *might* be hated' – He says you will be hated because of Him – because of our placing our faith, trust, and identity in Him. That is what is going on here, and these three guys don't even know Jesus – yet. The next two verses are ones to which we must pay close attention as they are statements of faith that everyone in this room – every Christian in this world – should aspire.

In verse 17 they respond to Nebuchadnezzar's threat by proclaiming "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand." Wow – what courage – what faith. Put yourself in their shoes, could you make such a statement of confidence in God – much less to a man of such great power and influence as Nebuchadnezzar? I'll be you could – with the help of the Holy Spirit.

What was the centerpiece of this statement of faith in God? God is able. There are two critical decisions we must make when we consider putting our faith and trust in God. First, is He willing to be our God? Does He truly care about our current and future wellbeing? Hopefully, we can look at the cross and the "willing" question is answered. Jesus didn't have to go to the cross – He did it willingly to rescue us from our sin, offer us the opportunity of an abundant life here on Earth, and then secured our eternal destination with the promise of hope for living with God in peace for eternity.

Secondly, is God *able* to be our God? Does He have the power to overcome our foes and challenges? Does He have the wisdom to help us respond to the difficulties of life? The answer to this question is answered in today's reading. He is able to provide Daniel the content and interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and we are about to learn He indeed has the power to deliver them from the fiery furnace. These three young men trusted their lives to the truth of God's character that He is both willing and able to be their God.

Then, in verse 18, they demonstrate an even higher faith. "But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." This is huge – how many of us tie the quality of our relationship with God to the amount of times we get what we want? When things are going well, we think we're in a good place with God. How about when things aren't going well in our lives? God isn't giving us what we want. Are we still extending our praise and thanksgiving then? Are we allowing our circumstances to dictate how we feel about where we are with God?

Recently, Vickie and I took a flight up to Seattle to attend one of her friend's son's weddings. It was an early morning flight, and there was a heavy marine layer – it was really gray and pretty depressing. As the plane hurtled down the runway, and we began to lift off the ground, it was only a few seconds later that we flew through the overcast and the sun was shining brightly and it was a clear blue sky. Vickie then utters this profound statement, "Isn't that like life, we're down in the gray and overcast, but God is up here just doing His thing like He always is." That's so true, isn't it? We get caught up in the daily grind of life and our respective trials, but God doesn't change. Remember the waterfalls? Colossians 3:2 doesn't just remind, but exhorts us to set our mind on things above, not on earthly things. This is where Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were focused to be able to take the stand they did against the king.

Nebuchadnezzar doesn't respond well to these statements of faith, and he has the furnace turned up 7 times the normal temperature. He gets some of his people to throw the three amigos into the furnace. It was so hot, that the guys who threw them into the furnace were burned to death.

What happens next is a demonstration of the second half of Matthew 10:22. Remember what the first half promised? "You will be hated by everyone because of me." That alone doesn't sound like such a great deal when we're considering surrendering our lives to Christ. You can imagine someone saying, 'Let me get this straight, you want me to change my ways and follow a God that will ensure I'm going to be hated? What kind of promise is that?' The answer is that it is not the entire promise. The rest of this promise is found in the second half of Matthew 10:22, "but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved."

Nebuchadnezzar stands amazed as he sees not three, but four men walking around unbound and unharmed in the furnace, and he says the fourth is like the Son of God. I need to be clear about the second half of this promise. Is it possible that God can step into our own fiery furnaces of terminal illness, shattered relationships, financial ruin and deliver us? Absolutely – remember, with God all things are possible. However, God may not deliver you from your terminal illness until you die – then He gives the believer the ultimate healing and takes us home. Notice the words "to the end" in this verse. Whether it is at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of our trials and tribulations, God will save us because He is willing and able.

In seeing this scene unfold and then realizing after their getting out of the furnace that not only were they not burned they didn't even smell like they had been around such intense heat, Nebuchadnezzar proclaims this fresh revelation of the God of these young men, "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him

and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God." May we each hope that one day people can say this statement about us as we face the fiery furnace trials of our lives.

Prophetically, chapter 3 speaks of the time of the Jews, represented by these three young men, will go through the fiery furnace of the Great Tribulation. According to Revelation 17 and 18 in the end times, there will be a unified religious system and a unified economic system both called Babylon. Where are the Jews in Chapter 3? Babylon.

Initially, Nebuchadnezzar treated Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego well. In the first half of the Tribulation, the Antichrist will be a man of peace and negotiate a peace with the Jews and their enemies. Nebuchadnezzar then set up this idol representing his Babylonian kingdom to be worshipped – the Antichrist will demand to be worshipped in the new temple known as the abomination of desolation.

Revelation 13 tells us that the number assigned to the beast is 666. Nebuchadnezzar's statute was 60 cubits high (or 90'), 6 cubits wide (or 9'), and there were 6 kinds of instruments played that called the people to worship.

Finally, in Revelation 19, we see the Lord throwing the beast and those that worshipped him into the lake of fire. The Jews that would stand firm during the Tribulation would be saved just as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were saved by the Lord. This stuff is so cool, isn't it?

The title of this lesson was "Three Tests". The tests were:

1. Denying the temptations to eat the king's meat
2. Figuring out the content and meanings of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams
3. Refusing to worship the statue

In each of these tests, lives were on the line should they not pass the tests. Thank God our faith isn't tested like this all the time. An important question we should be asking ourselves about these great men of faith is 'how can I develop such a faith?' It doesn't happen overnight, it takes a persistent effort, and the primary effort we must make is defined for us in Romans 10:17, which tells us that "So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

For those of you getting fatigued with this study, please know that your patience and persistence in studying God's Word is - brick by brick - building your faith. Our faith in Christ is everything, folks. Nothing else in life is as important for us as each of us will face fiery furnace times in our lives and see, as believers in Jesus, these difficult times are not punishments from God but opportunities for us to draw closer to those waterfalls.

Hebrews 11:1 speaks of faith as being the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Faith is always associated with hope, so the greater the faith, the greater the hope. What is that hope? It is the hope of developing and growing a close and personal eternal relationship with the Creator of those waterfalls of blessings. Hebrews 11:6 tells us our faith pleases God, it produces hope, and that hope promises rewards. Our flesh tells us what we want. The Spirit gives us what we need. What do we need in our fiery trials? Hope. We learned today Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego bet their lives on the hope that comes with their faith. God is willing, and He is able. He keeps His promises. We just need to keep the faith in Him. Amen? Let's pray.