

²⁸Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king’s command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God. ²⁹Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way.” ³⁰Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

Don’t expect the world to get it.
The gospel is its own power source.

Ezekiel 14 ¹Then certain of the elders of Israel came to me and sat before me. ²And the word of the LORD came to me: ³“Son of man, these men have taken their idols into their hearts, and set the stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces.

What is idolatry? Well, an idol can be defined most simply in this way: an idol is anything in our lives that occupies the place that should be occupied by God alone...Anything that holds a controlling position in my life is an idol...
- Dr. David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Life in God*.

Modern idol matrix (adapted from Tim Keller’s Counterfeit Gods)

What we seek	Restrictions we choose	Nightmare
Comfort (freedom)	reduced effectiveness	stress, demands
Approval (love, etc)	less independence	rejection
Control (self-discipline)	loneliness, no spontaneity	uncertainty
Power (success)	being burdened, responsible	weakness, humiliation
Security (certainty)	freedom	exposure



At Home In Exile

SERMONS IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL

One image Scripture uses to interpret our current place in the world is that of “exile.” Since Genesis 3 and mankind’s treasonous rebellion against God, the entire world is in exile and separated from their created home—the presence of God. In the midst of this exile, Christians find themselves having begun their journey home in Jesus. United to Christ, Christians are presently secure in the world that is to come even as they live in the world that “is passing away.” In Jesus, we are at home in exile.

In this overlapping reality of being “in the world” and “in Christ,” we experience pressures to both isolation from the world and assimilation to the world. However, Jesus calls us to a faithful presence in the world. He empowers us to live as his distinct people in a world that desperately needs to find its home in him. Further, he marks us out as a people who intentionally live under him as the reigning King in the middle of a world drunk on the power of empire and autonomy. All this requires careful clarity and courageous devotion – both of which God furnishes to his people.

The book of Daniel is historic “exilic” literature that captures these dynamics well and displays God’s nourishing power and wise ways for his people in exile.

A Place to Stand

January 21, 2024 | Daniel 3 | Pastor Roger Williams

In exile, God strengthens his people to stand with courageous faithfulness.

Daniel 3

¹King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its breadth six cubits. He set it up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. ²Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent to gather the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. ³Then the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. And they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. ⁴And the herald proclaimed aloud, “You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, ⁵that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. ⁶And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace.” ⁷Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

⁸Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews. ⁹They declared to King Nebuchadnezzar, “O king, live forever! ¹⁰You, O king, have made a decree, that every man who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image. ¹¹And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace. ¹²There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no attention to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

¹³Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king. ¹⁴Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, “Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? ¹⁵Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and

good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?”

Recognize idolatry for what it is.

A twisted search for meaning, power, and hope

¹⁶Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. ¹⁸But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

Respond in trust.

Embrace & Rejection, Respect & Defiance, Confidence & Humility

¹⁹Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated. ²⁰And he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. ²¹Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the burning fiery furnace. ²²Because the king's order was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. ²³And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace.

²⁴Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, “Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?” They answered and said to the king, “True, O king.” ²⁵He answered and said, “But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods.”

²⁶Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace; he declared, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!” Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. ²⁷And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them.

Remember the gospel.

Because Jesus went into the greatest fire for us, he will go into lesser fires with us.