

Missions Update | Bill Howell

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Preacher: Bill Howell

[0:00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. Some of these big timbers, white pines, some of them are 700 pounds plus in weight.

And they're 22 feet, the longest are about 22 feet long. So the brothers who work on construction, they wanted to prepare these timbers themselves. And so they went over to Luke's house and Luke Crane brought them in and they positioned them and the brothers were working on them.

And John tells me that the big timbers are done, around 200 of them or so. And so if the snow ever melts in May, we'd like to erect a new lodge, start in that direction.

So anyway, you can pray for safety and pray for the Lord to work with souls most of all and prepare hearts in every way. So turn with me to Daniel chapter 3.

We've been going through a study in Daniel at our home chapel. And often we think of Daniel, we think of Daniel the prophet.

[1:14] We think of the first six chapters as being kind of historical and then the second six chapters as being prophetic. But there are shades of prophecy throughout all 12 chapters.

And chapter 3 is probably one of the most encouraging chapters in the Bible. Start with the first three verses. Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold whose height was 60 cubits and its width 6 cubits.

He set it up in the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. And 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.

So 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. And this image likely comes from the dream in the previous chapter where the Lord had given Nebuchadnezzar the history of Gentile rule for the rest of time until he wraps up his plans for planet Earth.

[2:32] And of course you remember Nebuchadnezzar wanted his wise men to not just give him the interpretation, you tell me what the dream was.

He's having some suspicions that maybe some weren't real and all that. Well, Daniel had a God who could give the dream and the interpretation. And so Nebuchadnezzar is the beginning of Gentile rule, but the fact that God gives him this understanding lets him and the rest, everybody else know who's interested, God has planned this.

God has control. It's not just that the Gentiles have taken over from the Jews. God has a plan. And God's plan, when he made a covenant with Israel, he brought them out of Egypt and he gathered them together.

He wanted Israel to be a special treasure. And included in that covenant was that if they followed him, they would be the head of the nations. And if they didn't, they would end up as the tail of the nations.

And so for maybe about 80 years or so, Israel was the head of the world centered in the Middle East. The kingdom rose up under David and then hit its apex with Solomon.

[3:55] And yet Solomon also had the seeds of its destruction in loving his wives and succumbing to their idolatry. And eventually the kingdom, after Solomon, the kingdom split. And there are a few good kings, mostly

bad ones.

And eventually now we find Israel in captivity in Babylon. According to the Lord's plan, he put this off as long as he could. But then he had to be faithful to his conditional covenant that he made with them.

And so off they go. And here Nebuchadnezzar is the first of the kings of the times of the Gentiles. And their times will conclude with this stone you read about in chapter 2, made without human hands, crashing into the statue and crumbling the Gentile nations.

And the Lord Jesus rising up to set up his rule and his millennial kingdom. By the way, he being Messiah, a Jew, and he'll be on top in that period of time still to come.

But this whole scenario in chapter 3 reminds me of the future when the final Gentile world ruler will reign. He's referred to in the Bible as Antichrist by John.

[5:12] He's the son of lawlessness. He's the man of sin. In Revelation we read about him. God describes his character as the beast. He will be more fully Satan's man than any other previous wicked rulers that the world has known.

Like Nebuchadnezzar here, he's going to seek worship for himself. And there's going to be an image of him set up. In 2 Thessalonians 2.3 we read that he's going to take his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

Maybe when the temple is raised again, raised up, maybe he'll go into the Holy of Holies. Maybe he'll sit on the mercy seat.

We'll see what, well, we'll observe from a different perspective. Not from being right here on planet Earth. But it's going to happen. And then Revelation 13 we read of this image of the beast built. An image that's actually made to talk. And, you know, I don't know if that has to do with artificial intelligence or, who knows, demonic activity. But as many as do not worship the image will be killed if they're seen in public not worshipping the image.

[6:29] So a lot of shades of things to come we read in Daniel chapter 3. All along there's been Antichrists in this world. One that I think about was Antiochus Epiphanes.

Some of you are familiar with him from reading about the history of Israel, intertestamental period. He reigned from 175 B.C. to 164 B.C. He was a Syrian ruler and the Syrians and the Pharaohs were battling each other and they'd have to pass through Israel to do their wars.

And he took a special disliking to the Jews. And they would not submit to him. They were always stubborn. They didn't submit to God. They didn't submit to him. Maybe they were submitting more to God than him at this point.

But he didn't like their worship and he set up an altar to Zeus in the temple of God. And he sacrificed swine on the altar. This did not go over well with the Israelites.

And you're familiar, at least you've heard of the Maccabee brothers, a priestly set of men who rose up in resistance. Well, Antiochus Epiphanes came to his end.

[7:36] And then they cleansed the temple. And they lit the menorah. And it's said that they only had enough oil to last for one day. But it lasted, if the Lord allowed it to, for eight days.

And that's why the Jews around Christmas time celebrate Hanukkah. Hanukkah means dedication. And if you look in John chapter 10, you'll find the Lord Jesus walking in the temple at the time of the feast of dedication.

But he was just one of many. In fact, every world ruler who opposes the God of the Bible has the spirit of Antichrist.

But right here, now we have all the government officials of the world gathered together to dedicate this image to Nebuchadnezzar. Now, they probably knew something of what the dedication would involve.

They probably had a good idea. But it seems like Nebuchadnezzar is likely trying to unite his world in this attempt with everybody coming together, everybody worshipping together.

[8:45] And he's testing them to confirm their loyalty to him as the head of this world government. And we could say, in a sense, he's promoting government as God.

Primarily himself. But I think if in our own day, we're increasingly having those who are promoting government as God.

Wanting the government to decide what you should think, what you should say, what you should think, what you should do. You know, we have the obvious nations today. China, atheistic nation. North Korea, atheistic nation. They promote, obviously, government as God. And yet, I think this is going to be a growing trend. If we're in the last days before the return of the Lord Jesus, this is where our world is headed.

And a lot of people think this is a wonderful thing. Wow, if we could only have a one world government. People united together. Imagine there's no heaven.

[9:48] The songwriter said it's easy if you try. But it's not so easy if the Holy Spirit is working on you. And letting you know there is a real heaven. There is a real hell. And people think this is a wonderful thing.

But they're also trying to plan this. Leaders in our country and around the world, they're trying to plan it without God. And it's not going to work. It's not going to last for long.

Because man has an internal problem that causes him to clash with this fellow man. And yet, we see this coming to pass in Revelation.

We see things in Revelation that John could never have imagined would have happened in his day. But we see how the world comes together through media and communications in our own day and just around the corner.

We also read in the Revelation of Jesus Christ that the Antichrist at first is going to allow kind of a one world religion. Chapter 17 of Revelation.

[10:46] And we have this adulterous woman riding the beast. Adulterous woman speaking of false religion against the true God. Unfaithful to the true God. And then the beast consumes this woman.

Consumes religion. And so the Antichrist is going to swallow up religion and proclaim himself to be God. And the man that he be worshipped. And that those who are loyal to him take the mark on their forehead, on their right hand.

And people will say, well, I've got to eat, don't I? Well, do you? Well, what's more important? And some will stand for the Lord.

But the primary question that's asked in this section, Daniel chapter 3, is who are you going to worship? Worship. The Hebrew word for worship is found 11 times in this chapter more than any other chapter in the Bible.

When we get to the New Testament, where do you find worship being mentioned more than any other chapter in the Bible? Well, it's John chapter 4.

[11:52] When the Lord is talking to the woman at the well and she brings up the subject of worship and he's glad to enlighten her on God's perspective on worship.

Let's read a little further, verses 4 through 7. Then a herald cried aloud, So 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 worshipped the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

So here's this worldwide gathering and the Babylonian orchestra is tuning up and harmonizing to urge the people, encourage the people to bow down and worship.

The power of music. It's got a powerful effect on our souls. Nebuchadnezzar knew this. You know that. When I was 12 years old, I jumped on my brother's bike to ride into town, a couple miles into town for Little League baseball practice.

And I was driving down the gravel hill, coming to the highway, and so I started braking. Now in those days, braking meant you pedal backwards. Only when I pedal backwards, it just kept spinning.

[13:37] And about that time, coming across the highway, was a farmer pulling a set of discs on his tractor. And I just, I plowed right into them. Next thing I know, I'm lying by the side of the road. I've got a broken femur and some cuts needed stitching.

And I ended up in the hospital for a couple of months that summer. Leg up in traction. Memorable time. Anyway, my parents brought me a radio.

And they had good intentions, something for me to do. However, in rural Missouri, there's not a lot of choices in what you can listen to. And so as I'm spinning the knob and tuning in to whatever stage is available, I got really attracted to pop music for the first time in my life.

Twelve years of age. And I just, the music, it hooked me. It grabbed me. And I may have even hung along to some of the words of the music.

One of the songs that was playing over and over at that time was One, Two, Three, Red Light. It was by the 1910 Fruit Gum Company. The genre was called bubble gum music.

[14:44] Maybe some of you old timers, older timers, I don't want to call you old, but might remember some of that. And it's, you know, when you look at the song, it's kind of about a guy, he's putting the moves on a girl and she says stop.

And he says, look, if you keep stopping, you're going to have to break up. Not an especially noble Christian song, right? But I wasn't thinking about that. I just, I like the music.

I wasn't thinking about what the words meant. Another group I enjoyed at the time was Gary Puckett and the Union Gap. And Gary Puckett had a real nice voice. And one of the songs he was singing about was Young Girl.

Young Girl, get out of my life. You're way too young for me. Well, that's good. Stay away from the old timers if you're a young girl. That's a good, again, I may have hummed along some of these words, but I really wasn't thinking about the words.

I like the music. And as we think about, think a little about worship and music and words, I think if we're going to have effective worship, we've got to have substance.

[15:51] It can't just be the music that moves us. We've got to have the words, too. Now, you know, up here Dave was playing at the first meeting. He was playing the old rugged cross.

And, you know, the tune that he was playing attracted me. I could connect with the words there. I love Christian instrumental music. And I know some of you do, too. And you connect, but you connect with the words.

You know, when the Lord Jesus talked to the woman at the well, he said, Those who worship must worship in spirit. That means it's got to be from your heart. You're not just mouthing the words. And in truth.

And truth has to be connected to something from the word of God. Exalting thoughts of our God and Savior. You know, at camp, teens are moved by the music.

And, you know, in recent years, we've seen at campfire or in the chapel meetings, if a song comes up that teens really like, they'll just stand up.

[16:53] You know, without anybody telling them, okay, everybody stand up for this one. When they do that, you start groaning. But anyway, they do it on their own. They like the song. They just stand up. They're moved to do this.

And yet, those that stand up, some of them are believers. Some of them are unbelievers. And I don't think the unbelievers are thinking much about the words.

Because if they did, they might get saved. But they like the music. They're moved by the music. You know, ten years after I was in the hospital, I graduated from college.

I was out teaching my first year in a rural school. Coaching a junior high girls basketball team. We were on a road trip. And the radio's playing.

I'm not paying much attention. A song comes on. It's a Rod Stewart song. Do you think I'm sexy? And I'm not thinking much attention until all of a sudden I hear all of these 12-year-old girls singing this chorus.

[18:00] If you want my body and you think I'm sexy. Come on, honey. Tell me so. And by that point, I'm kind of thinking more about the words to some of these rock songs.

But, you know, they weren't. They're just a bunch of country girls from northern Missouri. Not like they were wild. They weren't thinking about what they were saying. I've got to. I don't believe.

But we, when we sing and when we worship the Lord, it's got to be more than the music. It's got to be words connected with the music. And we've got to focus on the words if we want to worship and exalt the Lord.

You know, those of you who are watching the Chiefs celebrate, I watched a little at the end of the parade. And more than once during the celebration time, you heard Travis Kelsey say, We've got to earn, let's see, earn the right to party.

And, you know, I'm thinking about that. Thinking with, you know, the Chiefs, okay, they won the Super Bowl, so they have the right. They have the right to party. Okay, that's the thinking. For us, we've got to, we've got to earn.

[19:19] How did it go? Is it earn the right? You've got to fight. You've got to fight. Thank you. Got to fight for the right to party. For us, as believers, we've got to fight for the right and privilege to worship.

Because it's so easy to be distracted. You know, these words, these songs we sing over and over and over, we like them, we enjoy them.

But are we focused on what they mean? You've got to discipline yourself. I've got to discipline myself to fight and focus on what's being said. Not just enjoy the atmosphere.

If I'm going to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth, I've got to do that. How many times have you found yourself like me? You come to the end of a verse.

Oh, let's see. Was that the second verse or the third verse? I better listen to see if everybody else is still singing or if they've stopped. Now, that's especially embarrassing when you're, if you're leading an a cappella session like I do sometimes back home.

[20:24] And if I pause, where's Bill and his loud voice? How come, what happened? And somebody timidly starts, oh, yeah, okay, we're going on the third verse now. Okay, I got it. But I miss the opportunity. My mind is wondering.

And you know what that's like. Because your mind can easily wonder. Sometimes I hear people singing and I hear somebody break out in harmony, you know, singing a part.

I like to do that too. So I start working on my part. And sometimes, if it's not a song I'm well known, I'm focusing more on my part than I am on the song and what's going on.

And again, if that's the case, I've missed, missed the opportunity to worship by focusing on words and lifting them up, exalting the Lord, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

So we've got to fight for the right to worship, disciplining our minds to focus by the Lord's grace. But Nebuchadnezzar, he knew the power of music and he's using it here to get souls to see things his way.

[21:36] You know, all of us, all of us who are believers, we have our own personal worship leader living right inside of us by the Holy Spirit.

And the Holy Spirit strongly desires to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ and lift him up. We read about that in John 15, 26, John 16, 14, when the Lord is talking to his disciples, introducing them, as you would, to the Holy Spirit who is going to be their comforter after he went back to heaven.

So we thank the Lord. He's made it possible. He's made it possible for us little creatures to worship him, proclaim his worth, exalt him, and glorify him.

Now back in Babylon, nearly every government leader is familiar with many gods. I'm told there were nine primary gods in Babylon and maybe 3,000 minor gods in that area.

So most of the government officials gathered together would have no problem with adding Nebuchadnezzar's idol to their worship accumulation of gods.

[22:47] It was acceptable. But you know, it's never been acceptable to the God of the Bible, Jehovah, Yahweh, the great I Am. That's never been acceptable.

And Israel has always had a problem with idolatry from their forming as a nation. They had that problem.

You remember God brought them out in a marvelous way. They became a nation in Egypt. He brought them out. Again, made them his own special treasure. He boomed forth the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai.

And then 40 days later, what are they doing? They're worshiping a golden calf. They're saying, this is the God who brought us out of Egypt and the worship is perverted, immoral.

Wow. Didn't you remember? The first commandment, thou shalt have no other gods. You heard that. Second commandment, no graven images. You heard that.

[23:44] They had a problem with idolatry. Fast forward a few hundred years and we find Elijah on Mount Carmel. And he's challenging the people. Who are you going to, who's your God going to be?

There's one Elijah, prophet of the Lord. There's 400 prophets of Baal. And you know the challenge. And the Lord spoke by fire and consumed Elijah's sacrifice. And for a moment, Israel decided, the Lord is God.

But it wasn't, it didn't seem to last very long for so many. And then after that, we find Elijah hitting the road, running, because he heard Jezebel's after him. And he's depressed and he's worn out. And he says, Lord, Lord, I'm the only one. And what does the Lord tell him? No, I've got 7,000 other people who've not bowed their knees to Baal.

Now, 7,000, that's not a lot when you're thinking two or three million. But in every generation, the Lord has had a remnant of people who will worship only him.

[24:46] And I trust that remnant today includes you and me. Now, the people on the plains of Dura were told there are consequences clearly outlined if you need some encouragement to fall down and worship.

And the consequences were a burning, fiery furnace that had to be within sight of the idol that they were supposed to bow down and worship. And if some official decided, I've got my best robes on, I don't want to get down in the sand.

Well, this would change their minds. And yes, they're willing to get down in the sand, fall down, and worship. You know, there's also consequences for not bowing the knee to the Lord Jesus Christ. And I expect probably 100% of those of us here who know the Lord as our Savior, we came to know him because we heard there's a hell and we didn't want to go there.

And we believed, God, that our sins would take us there unless we had a Savior to forgive us from our sins. And we need to pass on this message, this sobering truth.

[25:59] You know, it's a wonderful thing that God is love. And maybe for some people, that starts them on the road to getting to know the Lord.

You know, Jesus gets us. Maybe that'll start some people on the road to pursuing who he is and what he's done. But you're only going to get saved if you know you're a sinner headed to hell and you believe God and you don't want to suffer those consequences.

You've got to escape the wrath to come. And some people, you know, they say, okay, Jesus loves me. Big deal, so what? Well, you tell him, so what?

And then, whoa, wait a minute, that's not fair. I've got to turn, I'm going to burn. That's not fair. Listen, that's God's message. And we have the privilege to warn people.

You're in a house that's burning down. Escape. Well, there's still that opportunity. And we're so thankful the Holy Spirit's in the world. And he convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment to come.

[27:06] At camp, we have a five-year series of verses. And each summer, we focus on one of these sets of 24 verses.

And what the campers may not know, and the counselors may not know either, is that these verses, there's an order to these verses. And the first verses on the card talk about sin.

And some campers may come to Christian camp thinking, oh, my buddy says, it's really fun to be there.

And there's swimming. We can fish in the lake. We can go kayaking. There's lots of sports. There's good food. And, yeah, they're probably going to tell me, well, be a good kid, and God will take you to heaven.

I can handle that for a week. But that's not what we tell them, right? That's not the message. The message is you're not a good kid in God's sight. That is, you need a Savior because you're a sinner.

[28:03] And so our verses start out, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Or there's not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins. Or, behold, I was conceived in iniquity.

And in sin, I was conceived iniquity. And in sin, my mother conceived me. I've got to work on that one, I guess. There's not a right.

Jeremiah 17, 9. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked who can know it. Verses like that are the first verses. And so every Tuesday at our youth camps, you know, some

camps, some kids come to camp, they've never opened a Bible before in their life. They look at their verse card. Whoa, what? John 3, colon 16. What is that? They've never opened a Bible before in their life. But every Tuesday, I step out in front in the morning and the kids are lined up, ready to come in for breakfast.

I say, you know what today is? Tuesday? Yes. And every Tuesday at Storybook Lodge is, everybody memorize a verse day. And so the counselors support with their cheers.

[29:11] And some of the campers, they cheer too. And some of the campers are looking around. Whoa, what's that deal? I've got to go to school? I came to camp. I don't want to go to school. But we try to get everybody to memorize at least one verse.

If they only memorize one verse, it's a verse that lets them know you're a sinner. And that's where it starts and can lead to salvation.

Okay, we've got to speed it up here. Verses 8 through 12. Therefore, at that time, certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews. They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live forever.

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. And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of the burning, fiery furnace. There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

[30:11] These men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image that you have set up. But, and so, Nebuchadnezzar discovers, it's a report, there's three rebels who are interfering with this world unification attempt.

Everyone else bows down. What's their problem? You know, we may find out what, we may find out that we're in trouble if we don't support a one world government in days to come.

We, well, we support the king of kings and the lord of lords and his ways. But being dedicated to Jehovah was the problem of these three rebels.

Reading on, verse 13. Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and fury gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. So they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up?

Now if you're ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, and 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.

[31:31] And who is the god who shall deliver you from my hands? Now look who thinks he's over all the gods in Babylon, in the world.

It's Nebuchadnezzar. He thinks he's god over all the other gods. I mean, this comes out in his anger. But that's how he's expressing himself to them.

And it's the truth, isn't it? Verse 16. And Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 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. 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.

Now, they're not being rude to Nebuchadnezzar when they're talking to him. They're not saying, we ain't going to serve your stinking gods. We ain't going to bow down. No, they're just saying, look, our minds are made up. We've had our minds made up about this way before we got here.

[32:39] It wasn't like they gathered in the plains of dirt. Oh, no. You hear what he asked? Meshach, what are we going to do? Well, I don't know. What do you think we should? No, they had their minds made up a long time ago in this matter.

And we need to have our minds made up ahead of time as well. You know, some of us had our minds made up ahead of time. We got married. Divorce is not a topic.

We aren't going to discuss that at all. Some of us have made up our minds on Sundays. I'm going to be out with the Lord's people wherever I am. If I'm in Minnesota, if I'm in St. Louis, I'm going to be with the Lord's people.

I'm going to celebrate the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. I'm not going to look out, oh, you know, it's a really nice day today. This would be a great day for people. I know church is going on. This is such a nice day.

No, my mind's made up ahead of time. And I know your mind, the mind of many of you is made up ahead of time as well. If you're a single and you find somebody that might be interested in marriage and you're both moving in that direction, you don't wait until you're alone with each other and no one else is around.

[33:46] It's getting dark. Oh, what's going to happen now? Oh, you made up your mind ahead of time. No, no physical contact. We're going to be pure until marriage. You decide that ahead of time. Well, these men have decided ahead of time, no worship, the God of government or any other God, only the God of the Bible.

And they knew their God could deliver them. They had absolute confidence. But they also didn't know exactly what he would do. And the challenge here is, but if not, it's a challenge for us as well. You know, you hit a certain age, like my age and those of you who are my age and older, your body starts, it's not the same as it used to be. And your friends start getting this and that.

And some are delivered from their health issue. And some, sad to say, some die and go to heaven. Isn't that terrible?

I'm being facetious. But, you know, you don't know. Is the Lord going to deliver you from your health issue? Or is the Lord going to take you home to heaven? But the Lord can give grace. He gave grace to these men.

[34:54] And, you know, if it comes a time when you say, oh, Bill, I don't know. I've never been persecuted in this country. I don't know. I might collapse like Peter did and fail the Lord. Well, you haven't been put in that situation yet.

So you don't have grace to be an overcomer because you're not in that situation. But the Lord can give grace. He gave it to these three men. He can give it to you and me when the time comes. We don't expect to be thrown into a burning, fiery furnace. And you might even smile at that. But the way our world's going, who knows? Who knows what's going to happen to the Christians who take a stand for the Lord Jesus Christ and will only worship him.

You know, in our world today, many of our brethren are suffering greatly. They face a life and death situation every day. It's estimated that every two hours a Christian is killed in Nigeria, nearly 13 per day.

That's only the deaths that are reported. Well, let's see. You know the story pretty much.

[35:58] The king kept his word. He threw these three into the fire. And then he jumps up and says, wait a minute, one, two, three, four? Four? How many did we throw in anyway?

And yes, king, you were right. We only threw in three. And so he calls for these servants of the most high God. He's got a good opinion of their God.

I think he knew who these men were. And that's why he gave them even a second chance and didn't just throw them immediately into the fire. So I'll give you guys a second chance. He knew they were connected to Daniel. He knew they were connected to Jehovah.

But he didn't want to yield to Jehovah at this point. And so they come out. They don't even smell like smoke. I can't open my wood stove at home without smoke coming out.

And got to wear special clothes so I don't smell smoky all day. But God was able to deliver them so utterly, completely from this fiery trial.

[36:55] And they were moving around and they weren't alone. Their Savior was with them. And he'll never leave or forsake you or me, will he? He may have stood out.

Nebuchadnezzar knew somebody special is in there. Maybe it was because he was brighter than the flames of the fire. You know, he appeared that way to Paul on the Damascus Road, brighter than the noonday sun.

But they came out of their trial and they weren't scarred or broken. It wasn't like they had an albatross hanging about their neck. Oh, those poor men, you know what they went through? Yeah, they went through a lot. We don't have to be that way. It's not that maybe our body will be affected by some fiery trial. Maybe we'll lose a limb or this or that. But our outlook can be honoring to the Lord by his grace.

You remember Paul. Paul had a thorn in the flesh. You know, Lord, I can serve you a lot better if you take this out. He said, it's a messenger of Satan.

[37:54] Well, the Lord had allowed Satan to afflict Paul in some way. Was it a health issue? Some people think it was false brethren. Others think it may be an eye issue. He couldn't see very well or he stuttered when he spoke or whatever.

We don't have it there because we can apply this to whatever we think our fiery trial, our thorn in the flesh might be, that is. And the Lord said, no, Paul. You prayed three times.

That's enough. I'm not going to deliver you. I'm going to use this thorn in the flesh to keep you humble. Is there anyone in the room who's mastered pride and you don't need anything to keep you humble because you're there right now?

You got it. Of course not. So, you know, whatever your thorn in the flesh may be, whatever your trials may be, it's for the Lord to conform you more to the image of his son.

And I'll just, I'll close with this. Just think of the victories you've had by the Lord's grace in supernaturally forgiving those who greatly wronged you.

[39:00] Think of Paul urging the Philippian jailer, don't, jailer, don't kill yourself. We're all still here. I mean, the jailer had locked him in stocks.

And yet he led him to salvation and baptized the family members who also trust in the Lord. Think of Christian parents whose child has been murdered. And then they make a special attempt to reach out to the murderer in prison, almost adopting that person in place of their, the child he murdered. I've heard more than one story like that. Think of the Lord speaking up for the first time saying, Father, forgive them. They don't know what they do. Amazing. Think of the supernatural peace the Lord's provided for you at the death of a loved one.

It's only by his provision. I heard an interesting incident on Palm Sunday of 2017. There's a horrific attack in Egypt. ISIS targeted two Coptic churches and the bomb blast killed 47 and injured at least 109.

So many lives were taken, so many bodies maimed. Yet how did the leaders of the church respond? Believe it or not, they thanked ISIS. You may have wondered how it is possible after such an atrocity.

[40:15] First, they thanked the terrorists because they had sent 47 people into the arms of Jesus. In the moment of that blast, those who were killed saw their Savior face to face. Second, that attack, since that attack, their churches have been absolutely packed.

All those who were lazy about coming to worship are now running to church. As if thanking their enemies were not enough, the leaders of the Coptic church followed up by telling their ISIS attackers, We love you.

They told the extremists that they understood they were caught up in a lie and don't know the truth. Finally, the church leaders went one step further. They said, And we commit to praying for you. This put the Lord's words from the Sermon on the Mount into flesh.

Love your enemies. Bless those who curse you and do good to those who hate you. And pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you. That you may be sons of your Father in heaven.

Well, the worship service that Nebuchadnezzar planned turned out to be a worship service for Jehovah in front of all the world leaders.

And someday, as you know, every knee will bow, every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Father, we thank you for this wonderful chapter, an encouraging chapter of how you delivered these men and brought honor and glory to yourself.

[41:26] Father, help us to worship you in spirit and truth and to only worship you and none others. Thank you for my brethren here and the privilege and freedom we still have to meet together.

Ask you to strengthen each one in their family life, in their church life, in their individual lives. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.