

# The Furnace

(Daniel 3:19-29)

Yearly Theme: *“Kindness is... Amazing”*

Series Title: *“KING of kings”*

August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023

---

## Something to think about:

Humility. Humility is a virtue not easily acquired and difficult to keep. It's difficult to know when you have it, and hard to know when you've lost it. Its antithesis, pride, often masquerades as humility, but the difference is in the focus of the individual. False humility is demonstrated when a person is more concerned about how they are perceived by others than they are about serving others. Pride can convince us that we're humble by showing us how good we *think* we are rather than the truth of who we *really* are compared to the goodness of GOD.

Today, as we continue our series on the Old Testament book of Daniel, we come to a very famous passage that involves three men and a fiery furnace. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego – Jewish exiles in service of the court of Nebuchadnezzar – are faced with a situation to compromise their worship of Yahweh by being forced to bow down and worship a 90-foot-tall golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had made. When they refuse the king's orders, word gets back to Nebuchadnezzar who flies into a fit of rage and demands their allegiance, but they will not budge even in the face of execution. Nebuchadnezzar's pride drove him to do the unthinkable and have Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into a raging, fiery furnace. However, Nebuchadnezzar's pride would take a significant hit when the GOD of Heaven and Earth showed up. Yahweh would rescue the three Jewish exiles from the fire, and humble Nebuchadnezzar by showing him the error of his ways. Let's pick up the story today in Daniel chapter three:

Turn in your Bible to: **Daniel 3:19-29**

The theme of Nebuchadnezzar's reign as king over Babylon would be one of being humbled time and time again. Nebuchadnezzar would have to learn the hard way that...

**Key Point:** *“Yahweh humbles even the most proud so that they worship Him in praise and honor.”*

What do we learn about living a life of humility from this passage of Scripture today? Let's take a look:

- True humility requires faith in something/someone greater than yourself.

*Daniel 3:15-18 (NLT), <sup>15</sup> I will give you one more chance to bow down and worship the statue I have made when you hear the sound of the musical instruments. But if you refuse, you will be thrown immediately into the blazing furnace. And then what god will be able to rescue you from my power?”*

*<sup>16</sup> Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. <sup>17</sup> If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. <sup>18</sup> But even if he*

*doesn't, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up.”*

- The proud are blind, but the humble truly see.

*Daniel 3:24-26a (NLT), <sup>24</sup> But suddenly, Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in amazement and exclaimed to his advisers, “Didn't we tie up three men and throw them into the furnace?”*

*“Yes, Your Majesty, we certainly did,” they replied.*

*<sup>25</sup> “Look!” Nebuchadnezzar shouted. “I see four men, unbound, walking around in the fire unharmed! And the fourth looks like a god!”*

*<sup>26</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar came as close as he could to the door of the flaming furnace and shouted: “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!”*

- GOD opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

*Daniel 3:26b-29 (NLT), So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stepped out of the fire. <sup>27</sup> Then the high officers, officials, governors, and advisers crowded around them and saw that the fire had not touched them. Not a hair on their heads was singed, and their clothing was not scorched. They didn't even smell of smoke!*

*<sup>28</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar said, “Praise to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent his angel to rescue his servants who trusted in him. They defied the king's command and were willing to die rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.*

*<sup>29</sup> Therefore, I make this decree: If any people, whatever their race or nation or language, speak a word against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they will be torn limb from limb, and their houses will be turned into heaps of rubble. There is no other god who can rescue like this!”*

## Something to take home:

Phillip Brooks made an apt comment when he said, “The true way to be humble is not to stoop until you are smaller than yourself, but to stand at your real height against some higher nature that will show you what the real smallness of your greatness is.”<sup>1</sup>

John the Baptizer, the forerunner of the Messiah (Jesus) in the Gospels, speaking about Jesus to his own disciples proclaimed:

**John 3:27-30 (NLT), <sup>27</sup> “No one can receive anything unless God gives it from heaven.**

**<sup>28</sup> You yourselves know how plainly I told you, ‘I am not the Messiah. I am only here to prepare the way for him.’ <sup>29</sup> It is the bridegroom who marries the bride, and the best man is simply glad to stand with him and hear his vows. Therefore, I am filled with joy at his success. <sup>30</sup> He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less.”**

Like Nebuchadnezzar, we can either learn humility the easy way, or the hard way. The sad fact is that all too often, many of us are so stubborn that we have to learn the hard way by being humbled through humiliation. The easier way to humility is admitting that we are not the “be all, end all” to the world's problems, but that through the power of GOD, we can be a part of the solution. The path toward humility is to worship, praise, and surrender to GOD in whose image we have been created.

---

<sup>1</sup> quoted in *Burning out for God*, E. Skoglund, p. 11.