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“True Faith”

Daniel 3

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What hardships are you willing to endure for the sake of your Christian faith? When the “rubber meets the road,” will you be a person who is bold for the Lord or bashful about him? These are the kinds of questions that confronted Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael when they were ordered to bow down to an image of gold. How will you handle situations when your faith is challenged? In this message, Pastor Gary encourages us to learn a lot about faith, courage, and unwavering devotion from these three men.

Historical Background

1. Bible scholars believe there was a gap of 15-20 years between Daniel chapter 2 and Daniel chapter 3, which means that Daniel and his three friends would have been about 30-35 years old when their faith was challenged to the point that they were cast into a fiery furnace (circa 590 B.C.).
2. King Nebuchadnezzar, having long since moved on from praising God (when Daniel told him what his dream was and its interpretation), ordered the construction of an idol.
 - a. The idol was approximately 90 ft. tall and 9 ft. wide.
 - b. It’s likely the statue was made of wood and overlaid with gold.
 - c. There’s a lot of speculation regarding what the idol represented, including the possibility that it was made in honor of Bel, the principal god of the Babylonians, but there’s no way of knowing for sure why it was built and for whom was it built.
 - d. Nebuchadnezzar ordered everyone to bow down and worship the idol or suffer the consequences.
 - e. **Daniel 3:6** - “... *whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.*”

- f. When these three young men were exiled to Babylon, they had already had the blessing and advantage of being instructed in the ways of the Lord, so they were very much aware of the commandments of God.
 - i. Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael refused to bow down and worship the idol, no matter the severity of the consequences!
 - ii. **Exodus 20:4-5** – *“You shall not make for yourself a carved image – any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God...”*

3. Pastor Gary said: “There may be times when civil disobedience might actually be necessary... I’m not advocating for any kind of anarchy. I’m simply saying that there may be times when the law of man, that is to say, government, [and] in this case the king, [imposed] a law that [was] in direct violation of God. [As] Christ-followers if ever there is a law of man that contradicts the higher law of God, we must always obey the higher law of God, and, suffer the consequences that might [be meted out]. [God] must be supremely honored and worshiped and obeyed.”

4. There are other examples of civil disobedience in the Bible.
 - a. Hebrew Midwives – **Exodus 1:17** – *“But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the male children alive.”*
 - b. Peter and John – **Acts 5:29** – *“But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: ‘We ought to obey God rather than men.’ ”*

5. Nebuchadnezzar became enraged when he learned that these three advisors refused to obey his command to bow down and worship the idol.
 - a. **Daniel 3:13-14** – *“Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, ‘Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up?’ ”*

6. These God-fearing young men stood up and made a bold declaration!
 - a. **Daniel 3:16-18** – *“Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego 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.’ ”*

Faith

7. In biblical terms, faith is trust, confidence, and a firm reliance upon God.
8. Three Types of Faith
 - a. Saving faith – When a person believes and accepts what Jesus did for him or her on the cross of Calvary.
 - i. **Ephesians 2:8-9** – *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”*
 - b. Gift of faith – When someone has been given a special ability to rely on God in difficult situations.
 - i. **1 Corinthians 12:9** – *“... to another faith by the same Spirit...”*
 - c. Trusting faith – When a person believes God is able to work on his or her behalf.
 - i. **Daniel 3:16-18** – *“Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego 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.’ ”*
 - ii. Pastor Gary said, “Friends, this is true faith. This is probably one of the best examples of pure faith in all of the Bible because, please notice, they did not presume upon God. They did not say, [‘God will save us’]. They said, ‘The God we serve is able to save us.’ Some people think unfortunately, that true faith is focusing on or confessing a desired result, that if you believe in a certain thing and confess that specific thing long enough and declare it boldly enough that somehow God would be obligated to do it. ... That is not genuine faith. That is misplaced faith. That is faith in the results, not faith in God.”

Faith Should Be In God's Ability, Not In The Desired Result

9. We should pray specific prayers.
 - a. **Philippians 4:6** – *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God...”*
10. We should believe and not doubt.
 - a. **James 1:6** – *“But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.”*
11. We should believe and not doubt God, who is able to do what we cannot imagine.
 - a. **Ephesians 3:20** – *“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly*

above all that we ask or think..."

12. Pastor Gary said, "Too many people just go around confessing the result of what they want and think that's faith. It is not faith in the results. It is faith in the one who is able to do [beyond our wildest imagination]."
13. **Jeremiah 32:17** - *"Ah, LORD GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You."*

God Does Not Work According To Our Wish But According To His Will

14. God's will is always perfect, always on time, and his will is always best for us, but his will may not be the same as our will.
15. It's okay to defer to the will of God; Jesus did!
 - a. **Luke 22:42** - *"... 'Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.' "*
 - b. **Matthew 6:10** - *"Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."*
 - c. **1 John 5:14** - *"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us."*
16. Pastor Gary said, "Deferring to the will of God is not a weak prayer; it is a meek prayer. It is asking [God] for his best and [aligning our will] with his, so that he might do his good work in [our lives]."

The Results Do Not Define The Relationship With God

17. Pastor Gary said, "Their commitment to God was not dependent upon the outcome. [It wasn't an ultimatum]. ... They had a resolve that transcended the results. They had a relationship with God that was deeper than their desires so that even if things didn't go their way, it wouldn't change their confidence in God. ... Always we should hope for the best and pray for the best, but pray for the best and leave the rest, because God is going to do his good work in his good timing, and so it shouldn't affect our relationship with him. I see too many people who lose hope in God because God didn't do what they had hoped. Listen, if God doesn't show up the way you want, he's still God! ... If I am persistent in prayer and believe that God is able and defer to his will and trust that he has my best interest at heart, then if the outcome is not what I hoped for, it's no reflection on me that I didn't have enough faith, and it's no reflection on God that he somehow must not love me or care enough about me. Sometimes God says, 'Yes.' Sometimes God says, 'No.' Sometimes God says, 'Not now.' We always want him to say, 'Yes,' but sometimes

the best thing for us is for him to say, 'No.' ... There are simply some purposes and plans of God that we may not understand this side of heaven."

God Does Not Always Prevent Us From The Fire But He Will Preserve Us Through It

18. **Daniel 3:24-29** – *“Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, ‘Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?’ They answered and said to the king, ‘True, O king.’ ‘Look!’ he answered, ‘I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.’ Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke, saying, ‘Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here.’ Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire. And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king’s counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them. Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, ‘Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God! Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this.’ ”*
 - a. This preincarnate appearance of Jesus is called a Christophany in theological terminology.
19. Pastor Gary said, “There are times when God will allow us to go through the fire so that he can show his faithfulness in it. ... If God always prevented us from ever having to go through the hard and difficult things, how would we ever see his faithfulness? ... I’m sure, no doubt, God has prevented us in unknown ways from going through difficulties and hardships, but if that’s the way he always dealt with us, how would we ever really see his faithfulness through it? I don’t know about you, but the times I’ve seen the greatest times of God’s faithfulness in my life has been through the difficulties, [and] the hardships. ... Sometimes the greater miracle is not that God prevents us from going through something difficult, but instead how he shows himself faithful through it.”
20. **Isaiah 43:2-3** – *“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel...”*

Discussion Questions

1. Read [Daniel 3:1-18](#) to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments concerning civil disobedience. (See #3 and #4 above)
3. Read and discuss [Daniel 3:13-18](#). (See #5 and #6 above)
4. How have you been able to trust God when the situation you were in looked bleak?
5. What hardships have you been willing to endure for the sake of your Christian faith?
6. When the "rubber meets the road," have you been a person who is bold for the Lord or bashful about him?
7. Spend time talking about the three different types of faith Pastor Gary spoke about in his message. (See #7 and #8 above)
8. Read and discuss [Philippians 4:6](#), [James 1:6](#), and [Ephesians 3:20](#). (See #9 through #11 above)
9. What are some examples of times when you've deferred to the will of God in your life? (See #14 and #15 above)
10. Do you think it's wrong to defer to the will of God and doing so is really nothing more than unbelieving prayer? (See #16 above)
11. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's remarks concerning the fact that our relationship with God is not dependent upon the results. (See #17 above)
12. Read and discuss [Daniel 3:24-29](#). (See #18 above)
13. Read and discuss [Isaiah 43:2-3](#) and Pastor Gary's comments regarding the blessing of seeing God's faithfulness during times of difficulty when he walks through the difficulties with us. (See #19 and #20 above)
14. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)