

## But If Not

Daniel 3:16-19 KJV Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. [17] If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. [18] But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. [19] Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated.

### I. INTRODUCTION—THE BENEFIT OF STUDYING THE WORD OF GOD

-I have to confess to you that this thought developed several weeks ago when I was working on the Little Foxes series and began to work with the concept of the spirit of fear.

-Over the years, I have again and again been drawn to the value of what takes place when we

study the Word of God. It is literally the food for the soul. In a day when we are so experience driven, the Word of God speaks to us with the clarity.

-There is nothing else that can speak so clearly to us when we need to hear it the most. That is because the Word of God has some characteristics about it that no other book has.

- It is infallible (Psalm 19:7). This means it is perfect.
- It is inerrant (Prov. 30:5-6). This means that there are no errors in it.
- It is complete (Rev. 22:18-19). This means that we do not need anything else—extra revelation, another book, and so forth.
- It is authoritative (Psalm 119:89). This means that the Word is final.
- It is sufficient (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

-So when you read it systematically, devotionally, topically, and in corporate places of worship, there are great things that are added to the soul. Anytime that I look to God's Word there are things He adds to my soul.

## II. DANIEL 3

-This text that we read is perhaps one of the most familiar texts of the entire Bible. It tells the story of Daniel's friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, when they refused to bow down to the image that Nebuchadnezzar had put up.

-There was something that had gotten into these young men's hearts that attributed such an action to idolatry.

#### A. The Background

-This chapter comes on the heels of Daniel's warning to Nebuchadnezzar. He had been warned that Jehovah would judge and destroy his empire but apparently he forgot that very quickly. So he built this statue covered with gold so that his subjects could bow down and worship it.

-His kingdom was well organized and well structured as we note in Daniel 3:3:

Daniel 3:3 KJV Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

-In an effort to add to it a sense of decorum of worship, Nebuchadnezzar also added a great company of music. There are six different instruments noted in Daniel 3:5 but there were many beyond it because of the addition of “all kinds of music.”

-Nearby was already the roar of the furnace for those who refused to bow.

-Just a brief rabbit trail that I want to mention to you. There are some parallels between Daniel 3 and Revelation 13:11-18. The final Babylonian dictator, the anti-Christ, will attempt to enforce idolatrous worship on all, imposing a death penalty for those who refuse to give him their allegiance. He will use the number six in connection with that worship.

-You will notice a call to the tribulation saints to resist the idolatrous worship and even risk death to be delivered from eternal death (Rev. 14:9-11).

Revelation 13:11-18 KJV And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. [12] And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them

which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. [13] And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, [14] And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. [15] And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. [16] And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: [17] And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. [18] Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

-It is all about worship! Our worship is either going to be heavenly or hellish!

B. Three Refused to Bow

-But no matter what, God always has a few faithful, a remnant that refuses to bow down to the demands for worship. They are often in the minority and they will often have to stand against even their own families and friends because they are folding under the pressure.

- Death was staring them in the face but could not disobey.
- Their peers said they were stubborn and stupid for not conforming.
- Everyone is watching and you will not escape the fire.
- You are trading off your high office, royal favor, and even your life for the sake of Jehovah.

-It just did not compute with some. But here is what we have to understand, there are some who see the real value of the soul and refuse to trade off the shallow things of this life for the greater value of the one to come.

-A. W. Tozer wrote years ago that there are some marks of a spiritual man. These three young men fit the bill of what he was writing about.

- A spiritual man has a prevailing desire to holy rather than be happy.

- A spiritual man has a desire to see the honor of God advanced in his life even if it means that he may have to suffer temporary dishonor and loss.
- A spiritual man wants to carry his cross.
- A spiritual man sees everything from God's viewpoint.
- A spiritual man would rather die right than live wrong.
- A spiritual man desires to see others advance at his expense.
- A spiritual man habitually makes eternity-judgments instead of time-judgments.

-Immediately when these spiritual men refused to bow, some of the king's "tattlers" ran to him and told him sneeringly that there were "certain Jews" who refused to bow down and worship. It was used in the tone of voice that you would expect a racial slur to be used.

-Nebuchadnezzar went out of his mind with fury and ordered that these offenders be brought in immediately.

-This thing about worship is serious business. The devil doesn't like it one bit when we refuse to worship the objects of his kingdom to worship those of the Lord. That is why you need to let

your worship be directed God-ward and not earthward!

-Three of these men refused to bow!

### C. Hell's Worst Mistake

-Hell made a mistake that day. The first mistake hell made was to let these three fellows get together.

- Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!
- For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

-Can I tell you something?

- The devil doesn't care how much we preach . . . just don't let them get together.
- The devil doesn't care how much we sing . . . just don't let them get together.
- The devil doesn't care how anointed we are . . . just don't let them get together.
- The devil doesn't care how much doctrine we have . . . just don't let them get together.



- The devil doesn't care how much prayer we have . . . just don't let them get together.
- The devil doesn't care how much structure we have . . . just don't let them get together.
- The devil doesn't care how many are here . . . just don't let them get together.

-Because on that day, three men who got together ended up ruling the day. You need to know that when two or three get together, someone will show up in the midst of the fire!

-There are some who are dying on the inside to feel what we have going on right now in this house but they can't get together . . . You need to know that right now you are bowing down to that image!

- You really want to worship but you are suffocated by a grudge against someone.
- You really want to shout to the Lord but your voice is silent because you won't have a change of heart.
- You really would like to pat your foot or shake your foot or something but you can't because you can't get together with your brother.

- So the devil tells you to just sit there and act dead . . . because you are dead.

-But hell has made a mistake by letting you come in to a church full of a bunch of wild Pentecostals!

-What is somebody going to think if they seeing me not bowing down? What if someone sees me worshiping like that? You need to know that true Apostolic Pentecostal worship isn't going to run off anyone we want to keep!

-The mayor has been here before and if he shows up again we have to decide that we are going to get together and not bow down to the king's idol! We are going to worship Jehovah!

-Do you know what caused you to like Pentecost the first time you walked in?

- It was the freshness of freedom that you felt.
- It was the stirring down deep in your soul.
- You didn't have to worry about someone shutting you up if you said Amen!
- You didn't have to worry about an usher coming by to take you out because you were dancing in the Spirit!

-But now the king says, "If you don't bow, you're going to burn!"

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-Somewhere in your life, you are going to have to learn how to worship. Most likely it will take place in a situation of confrontation.

## 1. David

-David said, "Let everything that hath breath, praise the Lord!"

-He was a little radical when he was in the streets escorting the Ark back to the Tabernacle. But

David determined that nothing was going to rob him of an opportunity to worship the Lord.

-David had a golden image in his house that was confronting his worship too! It was his wife, Michal, and she mocked him in his worship.

- My how dignified you looked today!
- She made fun of him.
- She ridiculed him.

-But God dealt harshly with her. Her womb dried up and she was unable to have children. She lived in the king's house but had no joy. If you let a critical spirit get a hold on you:

- It will cause you to dry up spiritually.
- It will cause your spiritual womb to be barren.

-There are some people here who have allowed an image to get set up in their life and are bowing down to it. You have to defeat that spirit today!

-Quit saying, "that's just not my style":

- It is not for you.
- It is for Him.
- It is for the King of kings.

- It is for the Lord of lords.
- It is not by might or by power but by my spirit saith the Lord.

-Nebuchadnezzar's image wants you quiet because God inhabits the praise of His people.

-Some of you have let the images of this world choke out your spirit. Something ought to make you get up when you feel that image trying to slide into the pew with you.

-Let me tell you how to know if the spirit of Nebuchadnezzar's image has gotten a hold on your spirit:

- If when the Holy Ghost starts to move, you feel a tightening down.
- Right when you feel like breaking out, a hindering spirit shuts you down.
- When you feel like standing up and worshiping, you feel a tense spirit pulling at you.
- When you feel like raising your hands, you feel a squeeze on your soul.

-You have to understand that the climate of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom does not like worship

being directed toward God because worship loosens its grip on you.

## 2. Paul and Silas

-Paul and Silas had the very same thing to happen to them in Acts 16. Accused, maligned, beaten, and thrown in jail were these men. They were in pain and Nebuchadnezzar's image had time-warped to a Philippian jail.

-But at midnight . . . they prayed and sang praises to the Lord. We have to learn more than anything else that most of the time opportunities to worship come when we are in intense situations.

-About Paul and Silas they said, "these men do exceedingly trouble our city!"

-This church needs to exceedingly trouble our city!

I ran into a lady I used to work with at the hospital yesterday (7/14/12) and over the years she has been very involved and active in her church. But she was telling me that she had never seen a time when there was so much apathy among the people in her church. She said, "It is like they don't even care about God anymore!"

They have no desire for the Word and to pray! I just don't know what we are going to do."

-First of all, the Holy Ghost needs to come into that place with an absolute cleansing work of the Spirit. There needs to be a group of people to get a grip on how to worship. Even if it is just a minority, they can turn it around. We ought to be praying for every church in this city!

-Paul and Silas decided that there were some things they were going to have to worship through:

- The pain from their beaten backs.
- Their position in a dark jail.
- Their hands and feet being bound in iron.
- Their reputations torn in shreds by uncaring tongues.

-If you are waiting to get a perfect set of circumstances to worship, it will never take place.

-I am going to hit it again . . . One of the biggest mistakes the devil made was when he put Paul and Silas in the same cell and allowed them to get together!

-Jesus had already said when two or three agree together . . .

You better look out, Satan, look out!  
You better look out, Satan, look out!  
For I come to you in Name of the Lord,  
So look out, Satan, look out!

-If they would have put Paul in the same cell with Herkledorf . . . You know, that Herkledorf who wants to criticize and find fault with everything.

- Finds fault with the church.
- Finds fault with the preacher.
- Finds fault with the youth group.
- Finds fault with the peanut brittle crew.
- Finds fault with the singing, the carpet . . .  
the way the grass is cut!

-If hell had put Paul in with Herkledorf it would have been a disaster . . . but he got lockstep with Silas and they had a “but if not” attitude about them!

-There are some here who yearn to be set free . . .

- You have longed to break out of that rut of mediocrity.
- You have said it was your personality.



- You have said, “I’m just not that way!”
- You have felt out of place during the worship.

-Come on church . . . You can’t bow down now!

- Worship again . . .
- Worship again mother . . .
- Worship again father . . .
- Worship again young person . . .
- Praise Him!

-Worship is a mindset that you have to determine to stay in no matter what your circumstances are.

### III. HOW TO LIVE WITH A “BUT IF NOT” ATTITUDE

-There are some questions to consider in all of this matter:

- What in the world do you do when you see people you know falling down to worship an idol?
- What do you do when you see people who once held strong begin to bow down?
- What do you do when you see people who were once faithful to give in to the enemy?

- What do you do when there is fear in your heart and you are alone with your convictions?

-I have a feeling that fear gripped these young men to their core!

-There are four points that we find in this story that can help us to have a “but if not” attitude in our dealings with the world, the flesh, and the devil.

#### A. Faith Your Fear

-First you have to “faith” your fear. You cannot face your fear; you have to faith your fears to death. There has to be an element of faith that can literally choke the life out of your fear.

-They were in a high-pressure atmosphere and people were bowing down all around them, but they let their faith prevail. When fear starts talking to you, faith must talk back. Fear can never have the last word in our life.

- The just shall live by faith!
- We walk by faith and not by sight!

## B. Elevate Your Mind Above What you See

-The three young men had to get to the point where they were unwilling to let what they were seeing and hearing to bring them down.

-Your help comes from the hills! There has to be a higher plane of thinking in your mind. If the devil is trying to attack your mind, it might be best to not spend time with those who might feed your fear instead of your faith.

-Let them call you a Jesus fanatic, a Jesus homeboy, a holy roller, and anything else they can call you. Because as time passes you will soon discover that those who are trying to tear you down today will be looking for you tomorrow so you can help them.

-As a church and as individuals, we have to stay where we are! We have to elevate our mind above the level of carelessness, lukewarmness, and bowing down that is taking advantage of our generation.

-We can't afford to change our style! Let them mock, let them laugh, and in the course of time, they will be looking for a church that will shout

and worship and love God. When God elevates your mind, you need to stay there!

-Sometimes to elevate your mind, there are some things that you have to quit doing. Things like:

- Waiting for perfection
- Hoping for inspiration
- Waiting on permission
- Looking for reassurance
- Waiting for someone to change
- Hoping the right person will come along
- Dreaming about the administration to change
- Waiting for the absence of risk
- Waiting for someone to discover you
- Hoping for a clear set of instructions
- Waiting for more self-confidence
- Waiting for the pain to go away

-To elevate your mind means that you are going to have to ignore all the folks bowing down, the threat of a fiery furnace, and the choking fear that surrounds you.

### C. Avoid Anxiety

-Faith your fear, elevate your mind, and avoid anxiety.

Be anxious for nothing!

-If you don't speak back to your enemy, he will wear you out about something that hasn't happened yet!

- Let not your heart be troubled.
- There is a peace that passes understanding.
- Don't worry about tomorrow because each day has its own share of concern.

-Avoid people who insist on your being nervous and wavering. Sometimes you may even have to tell your own mind to "hush!"

I am reminded of a story that was told about Brother T. W. Barnes by a number of ministers in the United Pentecostal Church. Brother Barnes was literally a prophet of God in his time. Several years ago before his passing, he received a phone call from someone who said that a practicing witch in the Minden, Louisiana area wanted to see him. Without any hesitation, Brother Barnes said that he would see her.

As the woman came into his study, the Lord revealed to Brother Barnes that the witch had come to leave behind some spirits that were meant to torment him. When she sat down, Brother Barnes immediately started talking to her. The more he talked about the Lord, the more she twisted and squirmed in her seat. Finally, she stood up and started to pace around the room.

“I can’t stand it here,” she said, “I have to get out of here!” After she left Brother Barnes began to pray asking the Lord to take all the spirits that she had intended to leave to torment him and let them torment her.

The next morning, Brother Barnes received a phone call from the woman. She asked him what he done to her. He said, “What do you mean? You weren’t even in my study five minutes before you left.” She told him that she had been tormented all night long and that she had been up all night long walking the floors. Again she accused him of doing something to her. Then he told her that he asked the Lord to send back the spirits she had brought to torment him to do the same to her.

-Whether you are aware of it or not, if you have the Holy Ghost, you have the power to torment the devil! You say, give me Scripture for that . . .

Matthew 8:28-29 KJV And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. [29] And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?

-We ought to torment the devil for all the torment he has put into our lives.

#### D. Resist the Temptation to Panic

-Faith your fear, elevate your mind, avoid anxiety, and resist the temptation to panic.

-The devil is a terrorist and what he wants us to do to the church is cause it to get into a state of panic.

-Everything that the devil threw at Job was intended to make him panic.

-God has not given us a spirit of fear. Fear is a spirit that will do everything it can to make you sick.