

**Sun., Aug. 8**

Series: Strange Fire Series: (Daniel) "Living in the Fire"

Series Verse: Daniel 3:25 "25 He replied, "Look! I see four men, unbound, walking around inside the fire, and they aren't hurt! And the fourth one looks like one of the gods."

Memory Verse: "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and He will rescue us from your hand, O king." -Daniel 3:17

Message: Living in the Fire: Stand Firm

Text: Daniel 3:25 "25 He replied, "Look! I see four men, unbound, walking around inside the fire, and they aren't hurt! And the fourth one looks like one of the gods."

Reading of Scripture & Sermon Scripture: Daniel 3:1-30

Blurb: God preserved the three faithful friends from the fiery furnace. But we discover the story is not really about them. It's about God's bigger plan. So, this Sunday we'll learn that when we face the fires of life, we can trust in God to bring about His bigger plan. We must stand firm!

***[Recorded Worship Beginning]***

**WELCOME** -Pastor Andrew

**MEMORY VERSE:** -Pastor Andrew

"If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and He will rescue us from your hand, O king." -Daniel 3:17

**WORSHIP MUSIC SET** -Sanctify

*Another in the Fire*

*Our God Saves*

Worship prayer -Pastor Andrew

***[Live Worship Beginning]***

**WORSHIP MUSIC SET** -Sanctify

*Our God Saves*

*Show Me How to Live*

*Surrounded (Fight My Battles)*

Worship prayer -Pastor Andrew

***[Both Recorded & Live Worship]***

**PRAYERS:** "The Lord's Prayer" -Pastor Andrew

**SERVE MOMENT: Summer Kid's Bash** -Pastor Andrew.

**GENERATIONAL BRIDGE -Pastor David**

Addressing the kids:

Come on family, it's time for our radio program. Kids, you're going to love this, too. It's an exciting story about Daniel, from the Bible, Daniel chapter 3. It's about the fiery furnace! So, during the program, listen for

1. How many people are thrown into the furnace
2. How many people the king sees in the furnace
3. How hot the mad king commands the furnace was to be.

Listening? Here we go!

[Pastor David "turns on" radio and sits down on the couch.]

**WFHC RADIO SHOW Daniel 3:1-30 -Dramatic Reading Team**

3:1 King Nebuchadnezzar made a gold statue. It was ninety feet high and nine feet wide. He set it up in the Dura Valley in the province of Babylon. 2 King Nebuchadnezzar then ordered the chief administrators, ministers, governors, counselors, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the provincial officials to assemble and come for the dedication of the statue that he had set up. 3 So the chief administrators, ministers, governors, counselors, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. They stood in front of the statue the king had set up. 4 The herald proclaimed loudly: "Peoples, nations, and languages! This is what you must do: 5 When you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, zither, lyre, harp, flute, and every kind of instrument, you must bow down and worship the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. 6 Anyone who will not bow down and worship will be immediately thrown into a furnace of flaming fire." 7 So because of this order as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, pipe, zither, lyre, harp, flute,[a] and every kind of instrument, all the peoples, nations, and languages bowed down and worshipped the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

8 At that moment some Chaldeans came forward, seizing a chance to attack the Jews. 9 They said to King Nebuchadnezzar:

"Long live the king! 10 Your Majesty, you gave a command that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, zither, lyre, harp, flute, and every kind of instrument should bow down and worship the gold statue. 11 Anyone who wouldn't bow and worship would be thrown into a furnace of flaming fire. 12 Now there are some Jews, ones you appointed to administer the province of Babylon—specifically, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—who have ignored your command. They don't serve your gods, and they don't worship the gold statue you've set up."

13 In a violent rage Nebuchadnezzar ordered them to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They were brought before the king.

14 Nebuchadnezzar said to them: "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: Is it true that you don't serve my gods or worship the gold statue I've set up? 15 If you are now ready to do so, bow down and worship the gold statue I've made when you hear the sound of horn, pipe, zither, lyre, harp, flute, and every kind of instrument. But if you won't worship it, you will be thrown straight into the furnace of flaming fire. Then what god will rescue you from my power?"

16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered King Nebuchadnezzar: "We don't need to answer your question. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve

is able to save us from it, and He will rescue us from your hand, O king. 18 But even if He doesn't, know this for certain, Your Majesty: we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you've set up."

19 Nebuchadnezzar was filled with rage, and his face twisted beyond recognition because of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. In response he commanded that the furnace be heated to seven times its normal heat. 20 He told some of the strongest men in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the furnace of flaming fire. 21 So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were bound, still dressed in all their clothes, and thrown into the furnace of flaming fire. (22 Now the king's command had been rash, and the furnace was heated to such an extreme that the fire's flame killed the very men who carried Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to it.) 23 So these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell, bound, into the furnace of flaming fire.

24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in shock and said to his associates, "Didn't we throw three men, bound, into the fire?"

They answered the king, "Certainly, Your Majesty."

25 He replied, "Look! I see four men, unbound, walking around inside the fire, and they aren't hurt! And the fourth one looks like one of the gods." 26 Nebuchadnezzar went near the opening of the furnace of flaming fire and said, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the fire. 27 The chief administrators, ministers, governors, and the king's associates crowded around to look at them. The fire hadn't done anything to them: their hair wasn't singed; their garments looked the same as before; they didn't even smell like fire!

28 Nebuchadnezzar declared: "May the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be praised! He sent His messenger to rescue His servants who trusted Him. They ignored the king's order, sacrificing their bodies, because they wouldn't serve or worship any god but their God. 29 I now issue a decree to every people, nation, and language: whoever speaks disrespectfully about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's God will be torn limb from limb and their house made a trash heap, because there is no other god who can rescue like this."

30 Then the king made Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego prosperous in the province of Babylon.

#### **GENERATIONAL BRIDGE, CONTINUED -Pastor David**

[Pastor David turns off the radio.]

Wasn't that exciting? Thanks for listening.

So, kids,

1. How many people are thrown into the furnace? [3]
2. How many people the king sees in the furnace? [4]
3. How hot the mad king commands the furnace was to be? [7X]

And now, in the sermon, we're going to hear how we can stay faithful to God when we face hard and scary things, too.

#### **MESSAGE: Strange Fire Series (Daniel) Living in the Fire #3: Stand Firm**

#### **MESSAGE BUMPER VIDEO**

**PP#1:** (Daniel) Living in the Fire: Stand Firm

“[King Nebuchadnezzar] replied, ‘Look! I see four men, unbound, walking around inside the fire, and they aren’t hurt! And the fourth one looks like one of the gods.’” -Daniel 3:25

Strange Fire: Daniel: Living in the Fire: Stand Firm. Daniel 3:25, “[King Nebuchadnezzar [neb-you-kad-NEZ-ur]] replied, ‘Look! I see four men, unbound, walking around inside the fire, and they aren’t hurt! And the fourth one looks like one of the gods.’”

**PP#2:** *Image for the three men in the fiery furnace, preferably with the king watching*

We come to one of the most famous stories of the Bible: the three faithful friends thrown into the fiery furnace! Dramatic stuff! We’re in the Book of Daniel, and this story is chapter 3. But notice, Daniel doesn’t appear in this story! It’s a story about the supporting cast of the Daniel narrative. It’s about Daniel’s three faithful friends, whom we learned back in chapter one were also deported to Babylon with Daniel, who remained faithful to God like Daniel, and who rose to favor in the King’s court thanks to Daniel. Their Hebrew names were Hananiah [han-uh-NIE-uh], Mishael [MISH-eh-uhl], and Azariah [az-ah-RYE-ah], but they were given new Babylonian names, Shadrach [SHAD-rak], Meshach [MEE-shak], and Abed-nego [uh-BED-nee-go]. I’ve always wondered why we know Daniel by his Hebrew name, but his three friends by their Babylonian names...? Anyway...

The antagonists, however, are the same, still hot-headed King Nebuchadnezzar and a number of the other advisors who had become jealous of Daniel and his three friends as they rose in favor.

So, this is a dramatic story, right? *Very interesting and memorable.* But you know what? What makes this story *important* is that it is *applicable* to our lives right now. It is Scripture, which means that it teaches us important spiritual truths that help shape us as faithful Christian disciples. So, let’s go back to the story and discover how we can stand firm today.

**PP#3:** The Bible applies to our lives today: The Fiery Furnace

## 1. Difficult authority figure

First of all, look at the setup. It may not directly describe your life, but if you take a second look, I bet you can identify! The king is a rather unpredictable, unreasonable and hot-headed authority figure who has control over their lives. Do you have authority figures in your life like this? People you worry about just being around lest something set them off, and you are the receiver of their dysfunction? Do you have authority figures that seem pleased with you one day, and then the next you just can’t seem to do anything right?

**PP#4:** The Bible applies to our lives today: The Fiery Furnace

1. Difficult authority figure
2. Others conspiring against you

How about the other advisors? Back in chapter one, other advisors-in-training noticed that Daniel and his three friends were different and didn’t conform to the shared culture. So, the others picked on them. Yet God preserved them, they did rather well, and the king promoted them. At the end of chapter two it says, “49 At Daniel’s urging, the king appointed Shadrach [SHAD-rak], Meshach [MEE-shak], and Abed-nego [uh-BED-nee-go] to administer the province of Babylon, but Daniel himself remained at the royal court.” So Daniel remains in the royal court as a chief advisor

to the king, and the other three are sent as governors to administer three different areas of the kingdom. Wow, what a rise to success!

How did the others respond? Some may have been happy for them. But there were some, of course, that became jealous! “Why did they get promoted? I should have that job! Must be nice to get so lucky!” Do you know what that’s like? Do you have folks who watch you with squinted eyes, looking for every thing you do wrong? And they go and run to the person in charge and point out your flaws? It’s hard to keep going when others have it out for you! You are so busy doing what you need to do, but it seems they have all the time in the world to find fault with what you do.

**PP#5:** The Bible applies to our lives today: The Fiery Furnace

1. Difficult authority figure
2. Others conspiring against you
3. Fiery situation

So, a difficult boss and others gunning for them. And then there is the crisis. The king is a self-centered, close-minded, power-hungry, explosive megalomaniac. And he creates the situation where he wants to make everyone conform to his way. In the story it is a false idol of the king’s choosing. In your life, it could be a work project, or family dynamic, or decision on how something should be handled.

So, let’s review the setting: a chaotic authority figure, with others watching to pounce, in a context where you are expected to conform to a pattern that violates your integrity. Can anyone relate? Wow, the Bible is so out-dated and irrelevant, isn’t it? [!]

So, what does the Bible teach us about how to handle this kind of situation, how to stand firm, as we look at Shadrach [SHAD-rak], Meshach [MEE-shak], and Abed-nego [uh-BED-nee-go]?

**PP#6:** *Banner pix of NY Mets from [https://newyorkmets.fandom.com/wiki/Ya\\_Gotta\\_Believe](https://newyorkmets.fandom.com/wiki/Ya_Gotta_Believe)*

The wisdom of our culture teaches us to trust in ourselves. Melissa Gilbert, a famous female actor, was asked how she handled the time her daughter was in the hospital fighting for her life. She said, “I sat by her bed in the hospital room, and I willed her - I just willed her - to get better.” Remember how Tom Seaver and Tug McGraw famously explained how they took the New York Mets to the World Series in 1973? What did they say? “Listen up. This is how it’s done. Ya gotta believe!” People in line for *American Idol* say it. Graduations. How do you get through something? How do you achieve what you dream? You believe: believe in yourself, believe hard!

We hear that in church, too. “You gotta have faith. Believe in the miracle. God will answer your prayers.” Now, this is true, but we believe it like Hollywood or baseball: a belief focused on the results we want.

**PP#7:** Living in the Fire: Stand Firm!

1. Believe in God, not the outcome

This is not what the Bible teaches. We see a different trust, a different belief. It’s not a trust in yourself, or even the strength of your belief. It’s not a trust that’s focused on the outcome you want, it’s a trust focused on God.

So, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stubbornly choose God. They don’t choose God’s blessings or a promised way of life. They choose God and hold onto Him, “for better, for worse, for

richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish.” Think about why you choose God. Do you choose Him because of what you get, or do you choose Him simply to have Him? Let me put it another way: would you still choose God if you had all kinds of hardships, if all kinds of things went wrong, and your life fell apart? Or would you turn your back on God and claim He doesn’t care about you?

The jealous accusers tattle on the three faithful administrators to a tempestuous king who wants everything to be about him and his way. He makes the choice very clear: on one side a 90-foot gold statue, on the other side a flaming furnace turned up past high! Which will it be?

We here, today—thankfully we’re not starting at an idol and furnace, but yet we have the same choice in so many constant, smaller ways—why do you choose your God? Why do you cling to Him?

**PP#8: Daniel 3**

“15 ... But if you won’t worship it, you will be thrown straight into the furnace of flaming fire. Then what god will rescue you from my power?”

“16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered King Nebuchadnezzar: ‘We don’t need to answer your question. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and He will rescue us from your hand, O king. 18 But even if He doesn’t, know this for certain, Your Majesty: we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you’ve set up.’”

What do we see from Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego for how to stand firm as God’s faithful people? They are summoned to come before the angry king. What were they going to do?

Verse 17, they responded, “If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and He will rescue us from your hand, O king. 18 But even if He doesn’t, know this for certain, Your Majesty: we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you’ve set up.”

So, they know that their God *can* deliver them from any power on earth. Their God is greater. They believe that wholeheartedly. Notice what they say: Their God *can* save them from the furnace, but their God *will* save them from the king’s hand. That they know is true, even if God does not spare them. So, in verse 18 they say, “But even if He doesn’t...” See, their trust is not in the *results* God brings. Their focus is not on what *God will do for them*. Their focus is on what *THEY will do for God*. There’s a mark of a mature disciple! They are willing to let God be God, and for God to determine the outcome. They will continue to choose God no matter what outcome God decides is best! Hear this again, they stand firm in their faith, based (grounded, anchored) not on what is best for them in how they want things, but on what God decides is best for God’s Kingdom. Biblical faith is not confidence in WHAT God can do for us, but in *the God* we believe knows best.

Now, in this dramatic story, God does preserve them and spare them. But really, that’s not the point! Look back at verse 15. King Nebuchadnezzar boasts their choice as a challenge: “I’m in charge. I say what’s what. And my power is real!” And then, he directly defies their God, placing himself above their God and pompously challenging His power: “Then what god will rescue you from my power?”

**PP#9: Living in the Fire: Stand Firm!**

1. Believe in God, not the outcome
2. Trust that God is doing something bigger

As believers of the one, true God, this is where we get wide-eyed and say, “Look out, now!” And this is why Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego answered the king the way they did! “Look, king, our God can do anything. And we’re pretty confident that you’re about to get your pride shoved down your throat.” These men were students of the Bible. They knew the irony here. Their true God is an all-consuming Fire! The king’s fire may be the hottest fire on earth, but their God is hotter! So, they knew it was not really about them or what they choose. God was up to something bigger than them. “But just for the record,” they firmly declare, “we’re not budging. If God chooses to spare us, great. If not, well, then He won’t. But we believe that God is good all the time, and that all the time, God is good!”

See? They must have gone to Red Rock camp! At camp we declare that no matter what...no matter what we are facing, or no matter if God answers our prayers the way we want or not...we proclaim that God is good. *All the time!* It’s not about our comfort or our desires. It’s not even really about our welfare in this life. We trust that God is doing something around us—and hopefully even through us—to further a much bigger kingdom plan.

**PP#10:** Daniel 3:24-29 (CEB)

24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in shock and said to his associates, “Didn’t we throw three men, bound, into the fire?”

They answered the king, “Certainly, Your Majesty.”

25 He replied, “Look! I see four men, unbound, walking around inside the fire, and they aren’t hurt! And the fourth one looks like one of the gods.”

Well, in the fire they go! But then, look at what King Nebuchadnezzar sees. While gazing into a furnace he demanded be cranked up seven times hotter—so hot that its heat killed the big, tough soldiers who were chosen to throw them in—verse 24, “Then King Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in shock and said to his associates, ‘Didn’t we throw three men, bound, into the fire?’” Yes. Verse 25, “He replied, ‘Look! I see four men, *UNBOUND*, walking around inside the fire, and they aren’t hurt! And the fourth one looks like one of the gods.’” They were not burned, but also they were freed!

**PP#11:** Daniel 3:24-29 (CEB)

26 Nebuchadnezzar went near the opening of the furnace of flaming fire and said, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!” Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the fire. 27 The chief administrators, ministers, governors, and the king’s associates crowded around to look at them. The fire hadn’t done anything to them: their hair wasn’t singed; their garments looked the same as before; they didn’t even smell like fire!

And then, the king becomes a witness for the one true God! Verse 26, “Nebuchadnezzar went near the opening of the furnace of flaming fire and said, ‘Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!’” Not even a scorch mark on their clothing, or even the smell of smoke!

**PP#12:** Daniel 3:24-29 (CEB)

28 Nebuchadnezzar declared: “May the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be praised! He sent His messenger to rescue His servants who trusted Him. They ignored the king’s order, sacrificing their bodies, because they wouldn’t serve or worship any god but

their God. 29 I now issue a decree to every people, nation, and language: whoever speaks disrespectfully about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's God will be torn limb from limb and their house made a trash heap, because there is no other god who can rescue like this."

Verse 28, "Nebuchadnezzar declared: 'May the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be praised! He sent His messenger to rescue His servants who trusted Him. ... [the end of 29,] there is no other god who can rescue like this.'"

They trusted in God, willing to give up their lives, so that God would do what God needed to do. And now we see what God was up to: turning the king into His greatest preacher in the whole empire! There is no other god like this!

Church, believers, children of God: stand firm. Stand firm for God. Choose Him and follow Him no matter what. Believe in God, not in yourself or the outcome you want. Stay steady and faithful as you live in the fire, trusting that God is doing something bigger, something through you that will make a difference for His Kingdom.

**PP#13: Living in the Fire: Stand Firm!**

1. Believe in God, not the outcome
2. Trust that God is doing something bigger
3. Know He's still in the fire!

And one more point, and I will end with this. One of my all-time favorite southern Gospel songs was written by the Speer family back in 1989. It may not be your type of music, but the words have been burned (pun intended!) into my spirit. It's about a mother teaching her child this story from Daniel 3. It goes,

My mama read a story from the Bible long ago,  
 About Shadrach, Meshach, and old Abednego;  
 How the wicked king commanded they be thrown into the flame,  
 Because they would not bow and then deny their Father's name.  
 My Mama said the king stood high upon a balcony so tall,  
 When he looked in he was shocked by all the things he saw;  
 Because he thought that he would find them lying dead upon the ground,  
 But instead of three he counted four up walking all around.  
 Then I said "Mama, wait a minute, there's one thing that I must know,  
 If three went in and three came out, then where'd that fourth man go?"  
 And I never will forget it, Mama danced across the floor,  
 And these are the words I heard her say while shouting through the door.  
 She said, He's still in the fire and He's walking in the flame,  
 And He'll be there to help you when you call upon His name;  
 And He can still deliver by His almighty power,  
 While here below it's good to know He's still in the fire.

Church, know that our one, true God is still in the fire! So, when you find yourself in the fires of life—when God has not spared you from them, know that you are not alone. Our God is right there to help you; He will unbind you and set you free while within the fire, and He will preserve you. So, you can stand firm.

I'm going to ask Pastor Andrew and Sanctify to give this song a try. I want it to etch in your spirits so that you can know that the Holy Spirit will make you able to stand firm. The All-



Consuming Fire we trust in, who lives inside us, is hotter than any fire of life we may face. We may end up in the fire, but our God will free us and preserve us!

Amen!

Pastor Andrew?

**[IN-PERSON WORSHIP ONLY] CLOSING SONG: *He's Still in the Fire* (Speers) -Sanctify**

**OFFERING: -Pastor David**

-Give of your monies to God's work through this church. You can give in person, mail it in, drop it off or, most conveniently, you can make an electronic transfer or a debit card payment on the church website or by using the "square" on the bulletin.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS -Pastor David**

Next Sunday's message: Daniel 4

**MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David**

"If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and He will rescue us from your hand, O king." -Daniel 3:17

**BENEDICTION -Pastor David**