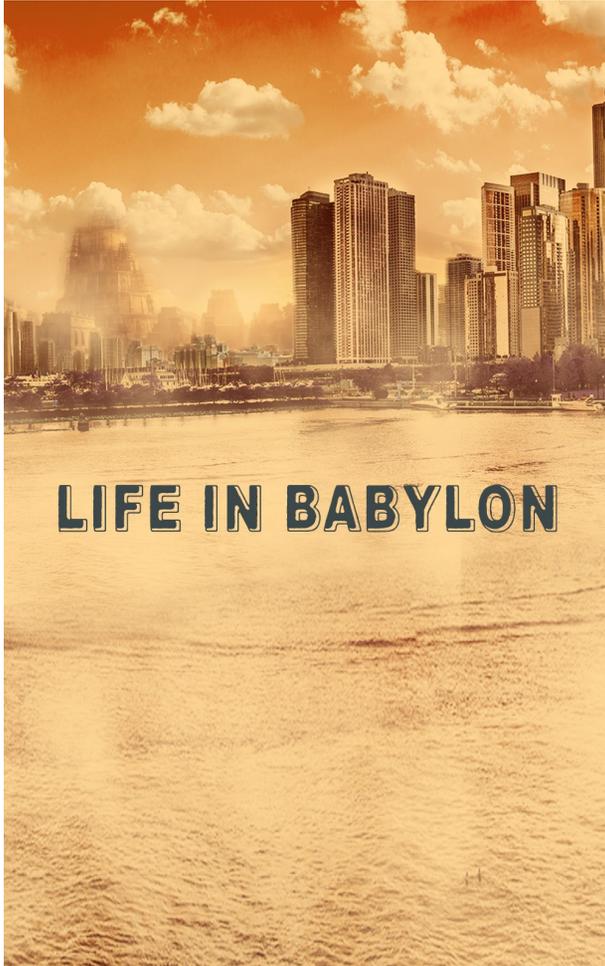




take it home



Worship Under Fire



God Alone is Worthy of Our Worship

“Truly your God is the God of gods and Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries.”
Daniel 2:7 NAB

“You shall be instantly cast into the white hot furnace; and who is the God that can deliver you out of my hands?” Daniel 3:15 NAB

Rewind to Daniel chapter two and we remember the chilling ultimatum of King Nebuchadnezzar to the magicians and other wise men. Tell me what my dream means. But first you have to tell me the dream itself. If you don't you are dead. If you do I'll lavish wealth and honor on you. The controlling and manipulative words of a narcissist king!

Now we see the king's arrogance again in his building of the large image of himself which he commands all to worship. Daniel's friends cannot do this: they have seen the power of the one true God in chapter 2, where He gives Daniel wisdom to answer the king's demand and save himself and the others. They learned that God is trustworthy and will provide. He alone is worthy of our worship. It is with this knowledge that they enter the fiery furnace. Will God save them? Can He be counted on? God came through before. Why is Daniel's safety being challenged again?

The Lord honored Daniel's devotion in chapter two and gave his friends the faith in chapter three to declare God as the only one worthy of worship. That took courage and trust: that the God who saved once will continue to be with them. He is the only one who deserves our worship.

Heavenly Father, you alone are God. I worship you and give you my thoughts, my heart and my future. Praise be your Name. Amen.

Maintaining the Focus of Our Worship

A herald then proclaimed in a loud voice: “Attention, everyone! Every race, color, and creed, listen! When you hear the band strike up—all the trumpets and trombones, the tubas and baritones, the drums and cymbals—fall to your knees and worship the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Anyone who does not kneel and worship shall be thrown immediately into a roaring furnace.”
Daniel 3:4-6 (MSG)

Daniel and his three friends faced a terrifying decision. Do they remain faithful to the one true God, or do they save their lives by bowing to the image of Nebuchadnezzar. Will they pay the ultimate price? They couldn't be sure until they entered the furnace. They had to face the reality that maintaining their worship solely of the one true God could end their lives. God could save them from the flames, but he might not choose to.

We've heard modern day versions of this story such as the persecution and killings of Coptic and other Christians by ISIS in the Middle East. We pray for all Christians who face such threats.

But, how are we challenged, even enticed to worship other modern day gods: success, status, things of the world. Do others think less of us because we will not bow to the gods of money, vanity, corporate ladder and such? Are we OK with that?

Does the “pearl of great value”, the grace and forgiveness we've received from Christ, mean so much more to us that we will accept the world's response to our words and actions that show our faith and devotion to the Savior?

Dear Jesus, strengthen me daily to accept any cost that may arise from faithfully following you. Amen.

Worship God in All Circumstances

“King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.” Daniel 3:16-18 NLT

It is difficult to find in the Old Testament a bolder profession of faith than in chapter three of Daniel where Daniel’s three friends respond to the king’s ultimatum. They profess these things:

- They do not need to defend themselves.
- God is able to deliver them.
- Even if he chooses not to, they will serve no one but the one true God.

Daniel and his friends know in whom they believe. They understand that the One who saved them in chapter two can do it again. But even if he doesn’t they refuse to let their witness to Him fail, and they accept that in that moment they may be taken to death and eternal life. We can have that faith in adversity, too.

Father of all mercies, grant us the strength to be faithful always and in every circumstance. Prepare us to boldly proclaim our trust in you in all circumstances, come what may. Amen.

God Walks Through the Fire With You.

Then Nebuchadnezzar was startled. He sprang to his feet. He asked his advisers, “Didn’t we throw three men into the fire?” “That’s true, Your Majesty,” they answered. The king replied, “But look, I see four men. They’re untied, walking in the middle of the fire, and unharmed. The fourth one looks like a son of the gods.” Daniel 3:24-25 (GW)

There are Daniel and his friends, thrown into a fire so hot that their captors perish from the heat. But wait! There is a fourth person in the blaze. It is none other than the God in whom they put their trust. The Lord doesn’t leave them in their moment of trial but is there beside them. Sure, he could have just spared them from the flames. But he wanted to show them, and countless believers over time, that God is right beside us, even when we are terrified of what may come next. And remembering that Daniel’s friends professed that “even if he does not [deliver us] we want you to know... that we will not serve your gods”, God wants us to know that we can trust him for everything

Daniel, his friends and the world came to realize something about the God of Israel through the trial and suffering that these men faced and were faithful through.

Believing that God walks with us through our trials are we willing to profess our trust in our Savior? And are we willing to talk about God’s faithfulness, even if we aren’t delivered as we would like? May God grow our faith to trust him always and in all things, regardless of the outcome.

God of all mercy, give us faith to honor you in all circumstances, that we may always bear witness to your love and faithfulness. Amen.

Worship God so Others Notice

Nebuchadnezzar said, “Praise the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He sent his angel and saved his servants, who trusted him. They disobeyed the king and risked their lives so that they would not have to honor or worship any god except their own God... No other god can rescue like this.” Daniel 3:28-29 (GW)

When our trust in God is shown during the hardest of times others can’t help but know that our faith is more than just words, more than stories which our parents passed down that we recite.

Nebuchadnezzar, amazed at the dramatic rescue by God of Daniel and his friends, recognizes this. What might he have said if they had been consumed in the furnace? We will never know, but perhaps the unwavering allegiance to the God of Israel that Daniel and his three friends professed may have stuck in his mind. Perhaps he had never seen such strength of belief and commitment in worshippers of other gods. Just maybe he would have never forgotten the faith and character of these men.

The writer to the Hebrews writes in chapter eleven about faith: “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for.”

May the outward profession of our faith, even in the most trying circumstances, even when we are totally uncertain of the outcome, be a light to the world and a trumpet sound that God is faithful and can be trusted.

Holy Spirit, help us to be a light that shines your love and mercy to the world. Amen.