



Message Transcript

Don't Fear the Fire

Jeff Schwarzentraub

Pastor Jeff:

Our father in heaven, we give you all the glory, all the honor and all the praise for who you are. Jesus, we love you so much. We believe that you're the king of the universe, that you're the Lord of life, and we come to celebrate you. We thank you for your living and active word because we believe as a people that every time it is faithfully and accurately proclaimed, that you are speaking. And Lord, our prayer this morning is speak Lord, for we are ready to hear what it is that you have to say. And so now, for all those who have gathered who desire to hear the Lord speak directly to you, who will believe what he tells you and who will by faith put into practice what he shows you, will you agree with me very loudly this morning by saying the word amen?

Well, for 13 years as a church, I think it's worth celebration. And anytime that you're celebrating an anniversary, it's a time of reflection, but it's also a time of anticipation. And so as we reflect this morning, I just wanted to share a couple of highlights for me because as we started the church, I remember we started from meager beginnings. When my wife and I moved out here in 2010, our children were three years old and 1-year-old. And I only knew one person out here who was definitely not a believer. We had played high school football together. We went to college together. And I remember calling him on the phone and asking him, "Do you even know any Christians that live in Denver that we could talk to?" And so he began to gather some people. We began to meet. Some of these people folded in, became part of our church, but it was really meager beginnings.

As a matter of fact, we were living in an apartment in the Denver Tech Center area and to come to our launch team meetings, you had to ride up the parking deck and there were 18 speed bumps going to the fifth floor that you had to get to. Once you got there, you had to come down five flights of stairs to go into a theater room that had 19 seats. And I want to tell you this, we couldn't fill them. We didn't have them. And I remember one time about the third meeting, we went home, we had gone around and talked about what we were looking forward to in the church, and my friend was there, but he had just rolled in off the golf course and had been drinking all afternoon and was totally inebriated and wasn't a Christian. And I just remember when it got to his turn, he is like, "I don't know. Jeff's just going to be a great speaker. It's going to be awesome."

And I remember when I went back up to my apartment that night, I'm like, "How do you tell your friend, continue to come to the meeting, just don't come drunk?" I mean, that was kind of how we got started as a church. And by God's grace, by God's grace, November 7th, 2010, we launched. We had 208 people in attendance. My friend was one of those people. He gave his life to Jesus Christ that day. Amen. His two children gave their lives to Christ, had a chance to baptize his whole family. He's still part of our church. God's doing great things in and through them. And what we've seen over the course of 13 years is God starting with meager beginnings and growing what He wants to do because when Jesus Christ is honored and the church stands firm on His word, God does amazing things, right? We're now on three different campuses. We're in Westminster, we're in Colorado Springs.

I just want to tell you this 'cause I remember we started with 208 people. We quickly over eight weeks grew the church to 113 people. And I remember thinking at the time, how is this going to work out? Because about 60 some of those kids are in the kids' ministry. There's only like 50 people listening to me. 15 of those have to be here because they're on our team. So only 40 people are coming on a weekend, right? So Colorado Springs, I see you. You're way bigger than what we were when we started. Look around in Westminster right now, 2,000 seats. You're way bigger than how we started. Look around here, 3,000 seats, way bigger than what we started, but it's not about size. Do you know that about 60% of churches that plant, some say 80% don't make it past year two? Do you realize the average church size in America is 89 people?

Now, size doesn't mean anything. There's a lot of large churches that aren't being faithful with the word of God, but God has allowed us to be faithful by expanding campuses. This fall, we launched BRAVE Academy. We now have a school K-5, and here's what I believe. I believe we're just getting started and I believe God wants us to anticipate what He's going to do in the future. And so God put on my heart this week just a message I want to share with you. We'll be back in the book of James next week, Lord willing. But I want to share with you a specific message that I think is true for us as we continue to journey because I believe as your pastor that my job is to continue to feed you the word of God so that you can continue to take steps of faith with Jesus so that one day you can arrive before Him and you can hear these words, well done, good and faithful servant. So this message is what you can anticipate as a

believer in Jesus Christ that wants to live faithfully for Him.

And I'll give you two words I want you to carry out with you today, don't fear. Don't fear. If you're going to walk with Jesus, don't fear. So if you have your Bibles with you, I want to encourage you, open up your Bibles to Daniel chapter three today, Daniel chapter three. Now, this story is a super familiar story. If you've gone to church, you've heard this story. If you grew up in church, you've heard this story. Even if you've been out of church, you probably heard this story and that's the reason why I want to present it to you because of the familiarity with it. But in this, we're going to hear four truths about why we shouldn't fear in every single generation, because I can tell you this, as the world gets darker and darker, the enemy wants you to be afraid. And I'm here to tell you, do not fear. Do not fear. The Lord is with you.

As I'm setting up this story, I want you to know why there was fear at this time because Israel in about 587 BC was sacked by the Babylonians taken into captivity. They're living in exile, they're in a foreign culture being encouraged to worship foreign gods. And we hear about Daniel, we hear about three other men, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, whose names were changed from their Hebrew names, which were about serving the Lord to serving the false gods of their culture. And this is where our story picks up in Daniel chapter three. It says, "Nebuchadnezzar, the king..." He was the king of Babylon. "Nebuchadnezzar, the king made an image of gold, the height of which was 60 cubits, and its width six cubits, and he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon." That measurement would be this, 90 foot-high statue by nine feet wide. That's what it looked like.

Now, whether there was a pedestal for it and it was a face, we don't know exactly what the image was, but there was this image, this shrine that was made by the king of Babylon for the people to worship. Notice what it says in verse two. "Then Nebuchadnezzar, the king sent word to assemble the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the rulers of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar, the king had set up." Now, do you know what satraps and prefects and governors and advisors and all that stuff is? I didn't. I had to look it up. Think about this. The satraps were the chief representatives of the king and the prefects were military commanders and the governors were civil administrators, and the advisors were counselors to the government authority.

And the treasurers administered the funds of the kingdom, and the judges administered the law, and the magistrates passed judgment on keeping the law. And all the other provincial officials, they were subordinate of the satraps who were the chief representatives of the king. What is this trying to say? Everybody who was anybody in the government or in the military was there at the king's command to dedicate this statue. And notice what happens in verse three, we're going to talk about them. It says, "Then the satraps and the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the rulers of the provinces were assembled for the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar, the king had set up. And they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up."

So everybody's gathered before this 90-foot structure that's nine feet wide, and they're ready to listen to what the king has to say. And then the herald loudly proclaimed. Here was what was announced in Babylon to all the peoples, "To you, the command is given o peoples, nations and men of every language." In other words, Babylon's ruling. I'm telling you, this is what everybody needs to hear, that at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, the flute, the lyre, the trigon, the sultry, the bagpipe and all kinds of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar, the king has set up. So when you hear the woodwinds, you hear the flutes, you hear the stringed instruments, you hear everything going on, that is your sign. And when you hear it, you will bow to this image.

Can you imagine a culture where the government would tell you who and what you need to worship? Because if you can't, just use your imagination because it's coming. And that's what was going on here, you will bow down everybody. Who? All the peoples from every tribe telling the nation, "This is how you're going to worship. When you hear the music, you worship that statue." Notice this, verse six, "But whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a blazing furnace of fire. Therefore, at the time when all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, the flute, the lyre, the trigon, the sultry, bagpipe and all kinds of music..." Who did it? "All the peoples, nations, men of every language fell down and worshiped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar, the king had set up."

Here's what I want you to say. Here's what I want you to see, don't fear the fire. Don't fear the fire, okay? Don't fear the fire. In every generation there will be those that

rise up that tell you, you worship our gods or there's punishment if you don't. In every generation, here's what I would say, number one, the gods of the culture will demand your allegiance. The gods of the culture in every generation always demand your allegiance. Now, I preached literally all over the world, and I remember the first time I went to India to preach and I was trying to learn about the Hindu faith. I realized there's two to 3,000, maybe even more gods. And if you ride in a Rick Shaw or a taxi, inevitably you'll see little shrines to different gods that they have there. And the reason they have them is they don't want to offend any of the gods because they're fearful if they offend the gods that something bad will happen to them.

And I remember thinking, how can you believe in two or 3,000 gods? So when you preach the gospel in India, the way you preach it is not Jesus Christ as one of your additional gods to the other two or 3000 you have. It's forsaking all of your gods so that Jesus Christ alone is Lord. But isn't that what you preach everywhere? Isn't that what we're preach in our culture? I mean, I hear some Americans say, "Well, we don't have that many gods in our culture. We're not like that. That's really strange that they would have all these shrines and trinkets and all these other gods." Can I just tell you, and this is not an exhaustive list? Can I just walk you through some of the gods of our culture that are demanding your allegiance right now? Here's one, humanism.

Humanism is mankind is king. Humanism is you are king. Humanism is. You get to choose what you want to do with your life any way you want to do it, whenever you want to do it because you know who's in charge? You are. You know who put you

here? You did. You know who you answered to? You. That's humanism. That's one of the gods of this age that demands your attention and is pulling you away from the Lord. That's humanism. How about materialism? If humanism is mankind is king, materialism is money is king. There's a draw to that religion. That religion is it's all about your bank account. It's all about how much money you have. It's all about what you're doing to set yourself up for the future. It's all about what you're able to do. All your money. It's your money, it's your money. Focus on your money. It's all about money. But the Bible says you can't serve both God and money.

Nothing wrong with money, but money is not king. Then there's hedonism. See, if you're drawn to this god of the age, hedonism is pleasure is king. Pleasure is king. If it feels good, I'm doing it and I can do it as long as I want, as often as I want with whomever I want, however I want. As long as it feels good to me, that's my god. Hedonism. You see that anywhere in the culture you feel drawn by that god? And then there's pluralism. Pluralism is choice is king. There's no one way to heaven. There's no one religion that's right. We get to choose. Give everybody the freedom to choose whatever they want. Always lead to the same place, you just get to choose whatever you want to choose. And if you choose, as long as you made the choice, then you're right. All religions are the same. There's no exclusivism to it.

Then there's patriotism. Patriotism is the religion that country is king. Country is king, and I will put country over everything and Jesus may even be subordinate to that, but country first. Then there's capitalism, socialism, communism. That's government is king. We just get the right form of government. We just get the right people in

government. If we get the right government, then we're going to be governed well. That's the religion that draws you in and that's where you spend your time focusing. And how about this one? There's wokeism. Wokeism is culture is king. The culture we live in is king. Peer pressure, political correctness, diversity, equity, inclusiveness. That's the God of this age. You feel anybody being pulled towards that? All of these cultural pulls are clearing the path for the coming antichrist, right? Every single one of them, all of these isms should have been wasms. Amen?

Because flying in the face of all of the isms is the gospel, and here's what the gospel says, "Jesus Christ is king." And you have to leave all the other isms to accept Jesus Christ as Lord. You can't just add Jesus to your wokeism. You can't just add Jesus to your materialism. You can't add Jesus to your hedonism. It's Jesus Christ plus nothing. That's why the gospel calls you to a place of repentance because prior to coming to Christ, you've been wooed by the gods of the day that are drawing you away from Jesus and giving Him your full allegiance. That's why we need to turn and repent from whatever God we were following and give Jesus Christ full allegiance. Here's the deal. In our culture today, the gospel is so wrongly preached in so many areas that people will preach a false gospel which tells you you can hang on to all your isms and just add Jesus to your isms and everything's good.

I'm here to tell you because I love you so much, if you don't forsake all your isms and let Jesus Christ be the Lord of your life, you are not a Christian. Amen and amen and amen. But don't be afraid. Don't be afraid. I mean, don't fear. In every culture, it's like this. It's been that way since Jesus Christ came to this world, became incarnate

flesh, died on the cross and rose from the dead and offered life to people. It's always been this way where there are certain people and certain gods of the age that are trying to pull you away from allegiance to Jesus Christ and to Him only. So the question is this, examine yourself. Make sure you're in the faith. I mean, here's three things that you can test. Test your time. Where do you spend your time? What do you give your time and allegiance to?

Test your talk. What do you talk about? What comes out of your heart? Test your treasure. Where do you give your resources and your finances to? Those are just three easy ones. Your time, your talk, and your treasure. I mean, if I could spend time with you, it could be pretty obvious who your king is. There's nothing wrong with money. God created us in His image. There's nothing wrong with us being human. There's nothing wrong with having freedom to choose. There's nothing wrong with being patriotic. Nine generations ago, my grandfather, the governor of Delaware, was one of six people that signed both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. I love the United States of America. I don't want to apologize for that, but Jesus Christ is my king. He's my Lord. First and foremost, that's in my life.

And that's why we have to hear this word because when these men are going to stand before the king and these edicts are given where the culture is saying, this is who you need to worship, this is how you need to worship, this is what you need to do, then we got to be resolved because the only king that culture hates is Jesus. The only king that culture hates in every generation is Jesus. Do you know why? Because Jesus said this, "I am the way. I am the truth. I am the life and no one comes to the Father

except through me." So when you choose Jesus, you're rejecting all others for the sake of the gospel. That's Christianity. It's not Jesus plus my culture or Jesus plus my ideals. It's Jesus and Jesus only. In Acts 4:12 it says, "For there is no other name given under heaven by which men must be saved." And you try this in our culture.

Nobody really has a problem with religion. Nobody really has a problem with God, but if you tell people that you believe that the Bible's completely true, that Jesus Christ is Lord, and if you don't repent and trust in Him alone, you will go to hell forever and ever. And that God loved you so much, He sent Jesus Christ to be sacrificed on a cross for you. He died. He rose from the dead. He's the only way you'll ever get to heaven. And if you don't reject all other gods and believe Him, you're not a Christian, see what people say, they won't embrace that. And the reason they won't embrace that is they want to compete for allegiance to who their cultural king needs to be. And I'm here to tell you as your pastor, there's only one king and His name is the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

But as you're anticipating where we're going as a culture, the gods of this culture will always demand your allegiance. They always have, but don't fear, that's true in every single generation. But if that's true, you also need to understand this, that don't fear because in every generation, the unrighteous will attack your faith. The unrighteous will attack your faith. If you stand firm on Jesus Christ being Lord, the unrighteous will attack your faith. Notice what happens. They've been instructed. When you hear the music, you bow down to the shrine. When you hear music, you worship

this image. When you hear the music... And everybody's doing it. Everybody's doing it, except for a few, notice verse eight. "For this reason, at that time, certain Chaldeans," who were also the Babylonians, "Came forward and brought charges against the Jews."

Again, we see the Jews being attacked. They always have been. They responded and said to Nebuchadnezzar, the king, "O king, live forever. You o king have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, sultry and bagpipe and all kinds of music is to fall down and worship the golden image. But whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire." So what are they doing? King, I'm reminding you what you said. Remember you said that? Remember you said that was for all people, not just certain people? Remember you said everybody had to do that? Let me tell you, verse 12, "There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon, namely Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego." Hey, there's some that aren't doing it. There's three that are not, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Now, their names were originally and Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, which were their God honoring names, and then their names got changed to serve the gods of the culture of their age. What was Babylon trying to do? Trying to rob them of their identity and who they honestly were, which is the same thing culture always does, tries to rob you of your identity in Christ and who you truly are. Don't be surprised when that happens at what culture always does. And here's how they knew, there were Jews that weren't doing it, but specifically there's three Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

"These men, o King, have disregarded you. They do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up. Here's how we know. They've given allegiance to their king and their king is not you and their gods are not your gods and they won't bow and they won't worship." So what happens?

Verse 13, "Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and anger, gave orders to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then these men were brought before the king." Now, think about who's been there. The king is there. His entire army leaders are there. All of the governing officials are there. Everybody's there. And these three men know if they don't do what the king wants, they will be thrown into a fiery furnace. That can be scary, but here's what I tell you, don't fear, it's always been this way. The unrighteous will always attack your faith. Notice what happens. Nebuchadnezzar, verse 14 "Responded and said to them, 'Is it true Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image I have set up? Now, if you're ready, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, sultry and bagpipe and all kinds of music...'"

This is about the fourth time we've heard this. "'To fall down and worship the image that I have made.'" Well, very well, I'm going to tell you one more time, this is your final time. When you hear the music, if you're ready to fall down, all good, we're good. All is forgiven if you worship the gods that I'm telling you. But if you do not worship, if you do not worship, you will immediately be cast into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire. And here's his question, "And what God is there who can deliver you out of my hands?" What's he saying? I'm the king. I'm in control. I can decide

whether you live or die. What God do you have that can rescue you from me? Who's bigger than me? You know what most Christians would do? Yeah, I don't know. That's kind of scary. I still love the Lord, but I'm not willing to die, right? Now, these men, I'm going to give you a little secret as to why they were able to do what they're about to do.

If you turn back about two chapters in Daniel 1:8, it talks about Daniel and you see what happens to him in chapter six when it gets thrown in the lions' den. But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice of food or the wine in which he drank. They were resolved. They knew the God that they served. They'd already made the decision prior so that when things heated up, they didn't need to become something different. They'd already been resolved as to who they were and how they serve their God. Here's my question, are you ready when that happens? Are you ready to stand when that happens? Ephesians six tells us to put on the full armor of God and to be strong in the Lord and the strength of His might so that what? So that when the day of trouble comes, we'll be able to do what? Stand. Stand.

Who's going to rescue you? Are you ready to stand? Now, I'm not talking about you fanatics out there, like, "I'm ready to be martyred anytime." You're really not because we think of martyrdom as some glorious thing that makes the front page or... It's not. It's usually off to the side. I mean, even Jesus Christ's death on the cross was with a few people that watched a Jew die on a hillside. It wasn't front page news for everybody. The gospel got told by His people and they saw it with the power that they lived in their lives. There's nothing about martyrdom that's attractive or I'm ready to go,

that kind of thing. Now, if God does lead you to martyrdom, I have good news for you. He will give you the grace needed to execute that, pun intended. And the good news is if you're called to martyrdom, you only have to exercise that gift once and you're home with Jesus, right?

But I don't think everybody's called to martyrdom. It's certainly not the case. Now, a study in 2014 has said since the time that Jesus rose from the dead, there's about 70 million people that they can calculate that had been martyred for the Lord Jesus Christ. Majority of the apostles were martyred. Majority of the people you read about in your Bible were martyred, and here's why they were martyred. They weren't martyred because they were going around just telling people, God loves you no matter what you do. They were going around saying, you need to repent and you need to change from all your isms and the cultural things that you're following, and you need to make Jesus Christ the Lord and you to serve Him and His word and honor Him and live holy. And if you're not willing to do that, you will experience judgment. That's why they were killed.

God loved you so much and here's how much He loved you. He gave you a way out of all of your cultural wokeness. He gave you a way out of all of your isms. He gave you a way out and here's what He did. He sent His son who died on the cross, who took all the wrath that was intended for you, and He died in your place and then He rose to life so you can have life, but the only life you can ever have is in Jesus. Will you turn from the gods of this age and turn to Christ? That's why they were all killed. They

weren't killed because they were walking around saying, God loves you. If you tell the world God loves you, most would say, of course he does. Why wouldn't he? I'm a pretty good person.

But you tell people, yeah, God loves you, but He loved you so much, He had to send His son to die because your sin is so disgusting He's angry with it every single day, and His wrath is all over your life. And if you don't repent and come to Christ, you will experience a Christless eternity in hell. That's why they were killed. I'm sharing the same message that they shared 'cause I love you. It's why the Bible says you better examine yourself and make sure you're in the faith. You better look at it and make sure there was a time in your life where you were serving other gods and then you repented and you made Jesus Christ the Lord, Jesus Christ the king. That you wanted Him to be, Lord, over your life. This false gospel, it's like I'm ready for Him to be my savior, just not ready for Him to be my Lord yet. Just find me one scripture that talks like that.

Jesus Christ is Lord. It's the Lord who saves. It's the Lord who died. It's the Lord who rose. It's the Lord who does the work, but don't be afraid. The Bible says in 2 Timothy 3:12, "Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." So here's the king. He's telling them, "Hey, you ready? I mean, we're going to play some music and if you're ready to get down on all fours and you bow before me, all good, very well, it's all forgiven. But if not, you're going to die. I will throw you into the furnace. You're going to die. And what God is there that can save you?" Don't you love that challenge? Don't fear. In every generation, the gods of this culture will demand your allegiance and every generation, the unrighteous will attack

your faith. If you're going to live for Jesus, that's going to happen.

I'm telling you right now, if Jesus Christ is the Lord of your life, just let Jesus be king in every area of your life. Let Jesus be king with all your neighbors. Let Jesus be king in the workplace. Let Jesus be king in the school. Let Jesus be king in the church and you're going to upset all sorts of people that are uncomfortable with that. I'm not uncomfortable with that because Jesus Christ is Lord, and I would give my life for that. Amen. That's what he's saying. But it gets even better. Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid because in every generation you will be given opportunity to bear witness to Christ. You will be given opportunity to bear witness to Christ. If Jesus Christ is really your king, I promise you, God will give you opportunity to make sure you can show others that he's your king. Notice what happens next.

Verse 16, this is how they're going to respond to the king who promised to kill them if they don't do what he says. "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, 'O, Nebuchadnezzar...' Don't you love that? I mean, everybody else is calling him King. They're like, 'Oh, Nebby.'" "We do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire." Let me tell you about our God. He's more powerful than you. He created you. We're not afraid of you because he's bigger than you, he's stronger than you. He's better than you. He holds your very life in his hand. So if he wants to deliver us, He's going to deliver us. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, oh king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

Is that resolved or what? Hey, government, we're not serving your gods. Hey culture, we're not serving your gods. Hey people, we're not serving your gods or any gods you tell us we need to serve. We've already made up our mind. We're serving the Lord Jesus Christ. You deal with that. That's the gospel, right? You see people that are resolved in their faith do it all the time. You love the story of David and Goliath, right? Where David kills Goliath. Why does he do that? Because he's standing in Israel saying to the giant that they're afraid of, "What is this uncircumcised Philistine doing in our land? This land belongs to God." Picks up five smooth stones, goes to slam and Goliath taunts him. He's like, "What am I, a dog that you're going to come at me with some sticks?" He's like, "It's not with javelin or spear that I come at you, but I come at you in the name of the Lord Almighty, and today you will know that He's the king."

I'm coming at you in the power of God. I'm not afraid of you. I'm not afraid of your ideology. I'm not afraid of who you are. I'm not afraid of your strength. I'm not afraid of what you can do to me 'cause my God is greater than what you stand for. And we love the story. He knocked him out and cut his head off, right? I mean, where are the people that are standing up like that? I mean, in the book of Acts, they said, "Hey, you decide for yourself, but we cannot stop speaking about what we've seen and heard." And then when they beat the apostles, they went away as worthy. They were celebrating, we are worthy to be beaten for the name of Jesus. They stood firm. The reason we gather as a church is because people stood firm in the face of tyranny for the sake of the gospel. They did it in love. They did it in confidence, and they did it because they knew the truth of God.

Or how about Stephen in Acts chapter seven, where after giving them a history of all Israel and how all of the fathers had killed all the prophets that came before them, and then they had murdered the Messiah and their blood was on their own heads. He's like, "You stiff neck people, how long is it going to take until you repent?" And so they martyred him. You have people standing up all the time, even Jesus. Are you the Messiah? Are you the Messiah? Mark 14:62, "I am, and the next time you see me, I'll be coming on the clouds of heaven in judgment." Do you not get it? Jesus Christ is Lord, whether you like it or not. And when you stand before Him, you'll hear one of two things. Either well done, good and faithful servant or depart from me, you worker of iniquity. I never knew you because I've never been your king, and I'm certainly not going to be your king now. That's the gospel.

And God loves you so much, He doesn't want anyone to perish. He does not take any delight in the death of even the wicked people. He wants all to repent. That's why He sent His son in love so you'd never have to experience the wrath of God. But what it takes is Christians that are willing to stand up in the face of tyranny. In every generation, that's what happens. That's why in every generation there are some that are martyred. In every generation, there are some that are mocked. And in every generation there are some that are beaten. And in every generation there are some that are mistreated. Why? Because that's what culture does to those who stand for Jesus Christ. And I'm here to tell you, no matter who you are, you'll be given opportunity to bear witness for Christ. That will cost you something. I don't know what

it will cost you, but it will cost you something.

They were saying, we don't care. You can take our life, but you can't take away our relationship with God. You can do whatever you want to us, but we're not intimidated by you. We're not scared by you. When I read these stories during 2020, I'm just here to tell you, it was a confusing time for me and for a lot of people because we didn't know what was going on with the pandemic that happened, right? We didn't know. I didn't know, but I'm watching stuff and things aren't adding up and it looks like lies. But then I start reading the word and I'm like, now why is it we can only have 50 people? And why is it we can only have 10? And I remember talking to our governor on the phone on a conference call and asking him questions, "How come Home Depot can do it? How come King Soopers can do it? How come Walmart can do it? Please help me understand why our church can't do it." And it was blah, blah, blah, blah, blah for five minutes.

And I remember reading these texts and I'm going to meet these men someday in heaven, and I didn't want them to ask me, "Hey, tell me what it was like for you." Well, Steven, I know you were martyred for standing up and Daniel, you were thrown into a lion's den and Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, you went into a fiery furnace, but we had COVID, so we shut down because we were really scared. You don't understand, I mean, nonsense. The word tells us to continue to meet so we opened our doors to continue to meet. We will always keep our doors open, and this is why, because the word of God dictates and mandates that we do. And here's what the thing is, courage begets courage. If somebody will stand up and just say, we're living for

principles of Jesus, He's our king, it doesn't matter. You can kill me, it doesn't matter. I'm standing up for Jesus. That begets courage.

And there's too few people in our culture, not only in my profession, but Christians in general, that refuse to step up and are stepping back in passivity saying, you have all your other gods. Do whatever you want. Just don't bother us. One day you won't get a choice, and I'm here to tell you better decide now who your God is because the day's coming. The day's coming where whatever's in your bank account, it may not be there two hours from now. Whether you're a billionaire, you have 100 bucks, it's gone. You don't give allegiance to the antichrist, it's gone. They're already doing that with some banks. They're already doing that with some Christians. Do you not see all that coming? You better make a decision now because in the moment it's too late to decide where your allegiance is. Give your allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ now and watch Him take you through.

Now, it's one thing to stand firm. It's another thing to not know the outcome because we don't know the outcome. We don't know what's going to happen. But I want to give you some really, really good news. Really, really good news. Number four, don't fear. In every generation, you are never alone when you choose Christ over culture. Don't fear. In every generation, when you choose Christ over culture, you are never alone. Jesus promised us in the great commission in Matthew 28:20, "I'll be with you always to the end of the age." Hebrews 13:5 says, "I will never leave you or forsake you." If you're in a mob of thousands of people and you're the only Christian, I want to tell you something, you are not alone when you choose Christ. Not alone. Now,

notice what happens. Verse 19, "Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with wrath and his facial expression was altered."

I wonder, what did that facial expression look like? Can you imagine it? It was altered. He had never heard anybody stand up to him before. It was altered toward Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and he answered by giving orders to heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. Now, there's hot and then there's hot, hot. I mean, I don't even understand seven times more what that would've done. I think he was just enraged, like, make it as hot as we possibly can. "He commanded certain valiant warriors who were in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in order to cast them into the furnace of blazing fire." Now, can you picture the same? These three men are standing all by themselves with all the government officials and all the military commanders, and they're being tied hand and feet by these men who were super strong.

Then these men were tied up in their trousers, their coats, their caps and all their other clothes, and they were cast into the midst of this burning fire that was now seven times hotter. Notice how hot it was. For this reason, because the king's command was urgent and the furnace had been made extremely hot, the flame of the fire slew the men who carried up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Here's how hot the flames were. The guys that tied them up that went to throw them in, they burned to a crisp. They burned just getting close to the flame. That's how hot God wants you to know that the flame was. That's how difficult the trial was. I mean, there's no chance for Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. There's no chance. Even the people throwing them

in the fire that aren't going into the fire, they're being burned alive. They're dying. They're dead. They're done, right? But I love this. Don't you love this?

But these three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego fell into the midst of the furnace of the blazing fire still tied up." Now, watch this. Then Nebuchadnezzar, the king was astounded. He had been seated and he stood up in haste and he said to his high officials, he asked a question, "Was it not three men we cast bound into the midst of the fire?" They replied to the king, "Certainly o king, we threw three in. That's it." Watch this. He said, "Look, I see four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods." Nebuchadnezzar said, "I have all power. I have all authority. I have all might. I will kill you. It's so strong that when I'm throwing you in, the people that are throwing you in, they're going to die." And he's watching and he stands up. He's like, "Time out. Were there not three. I thought we threw three in because I'm looking right now and there's not three, but there's four. And that fourth one looks like a son of the gods."

Who is in the fire with them? The pre-incarnate Jesus Christ, and what are they doing? I don't know, but they're doing the first fire walking. They're just walking around, chatting it up, doing all these things, and King Nebuchadnezzar is astounded because the ones who threw them into the fire were burnt to a crisp. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were fine. They're just hanging out talking with Jesus. So here's what happens. Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the furnace. He didn't want to get by the fire 'cause it was too hot. He came to the door of the furnace of blazing

fire. He responded and said, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, come out you servants of the most high God and come here." Can you picture that? Can you picture his facial expression that went from rage and anger to throwing them in where he is kind of coming up, he's like, "Hey, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego come out, you servants of the most high God? Let's have a chit-chat. I got to know what's going on here 'cause whoever is in that fire with you is more powerful than I thought I was."

Then Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out from the midst of the fire. Now, picture what it's like even when you're at a campfire. I mean, when you're at a campfire, even if you're around the campfire for about five minutes, your clothes smell like smoke or you're with somebody smoking a cigar, your clothes smell like a cigar. You're with somebody smoking a cigarette, your clothes smell like a cigarette. And if you get too close to the fire, you can singe your hair. I can't, but some people can. Your pants get singed. You start smelling different. Notice what happens. So he calls them out, "Come here." Then Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the midst of the fire, the satraps, the prefects, the governors and the king's high officials all gathered around and saw in regard to these men that the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men, nor was the hair of their head singed, nor were their trousers damaged, nor had the smell of fire even come upon them.

They came out just as clean as they were when they went in. Nebuchadnezzar responded and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who sent His angel and delivered His servants, who put their trust in Him, violating the king's command and yielding up their body so as to not serve or worship any God except

their own God." What if Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had said, we don't want to die? We love our God, but I don't want to testify. I mean, it's pointless for us to die. I mean, why would I want to die? I still want to live. I mean, what do they say? It doesn't matter, whatever God brings our way, we'll do it His way no matter what. And because they stood firm, the king of Babylon gives his life to the God of the universe. We need more Christians that are going to stand up and not walk back and not waltz back because the cultural isms that you see are not cultural isms. They're gods that our culture is serving.

And if you serve those gods, you will be damned for all eternity. So stand up against them. I'll tell you right now as your pastor, I'm not afraid to stand up against the gods of this culture. Not at all. And I wish more pastors would stand up against the gods of this culture because the gospel is not add Jesus to your cultural gods. The gospel is forsake all the gods of your culture and stand up for Jesus Christ alone. Live for him. Embody Him and tell others they need to repent and trust Him. That's the gospel. Notice what Nebuchadnezzar does, verse 29, "Therefore, I make a decree that any people, nation or tongue, that speaks anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses reduced to a rubbish heap." Now, that's not really what the Lord would've had them do right?, Now you're going to worship their God or we'll kill you too. I mean, that's not Christian.

The Christian gospel is not you have to do what we do or we'll kill you. The Christian gospel is Christ already died for you, will you please come to save the

coming wrath that's on you? Nebuchadnezzar says, "In as much as there is no other God who is able to deliver in this way, I asked you, what God can save you? Now I know there's only one, and he's your God." Then the king caused Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to prosper in the province of Babylon. Where were they prospering? In a foreign land. They are prospering in a place with all sorts of other gods. And here's what the truth is. When you go through a trial, if you're resolved, here's what God can do. He can protect you from the fire. He can keep you out of it. He can lead you through the fire. He can take you right through it, or He can testify with you in the fire. Death is not the worst thing that can happen to you. Self-preservation is not the goal of Christianity. Honoring the Lord Jesus Christ is. Honoring the Lord Jesus Christ.

I mean, you think about this. Hasn't this been true in every single generation, the feel of fear to stand for Jesus? But don't fear, in every generation, the gods of all culture will demand your allegiance. The unrighteous will attack your faith. You'll be given the opportunity to bear witness. You will be, and here's why you need to because you're never alone when you choose Christ over the culture. I'm here to tell you today as your pastor or if you're here visiting, that God does indeed love you and He loves you so much that he sent His son Jesus to rescue you. But the gospel is not that you're just in a bad place and just believe that Jesus died because even the demons believe that Jesus died and they shudder. The gospel is this, that the problem in the world and all the problems you see around you stem from you. You're the problem. It's your sin.

The problems in the world are me, they're my sin. And the only way to get rid of

the problem is for you to come to the cross. That's why the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. It's not about getting religion. It's not about joining whatever ism that you need to join. It's about repenting and believing there's a line in the sand and on this side are all the gods of the world, and on this side, Jesus Christ is king. Have you repented and trusted Jesus Christ as your king? If not, why not make today the day that you make Jesus Christ the Lord of your life? In just a little bit, you're going to hear some testimonies from people who are getting baptized there. You're going to celebrate new life of people who have crossed that line of faith and said, I'm forsaking those, and I want all of Christ. I want Jesus to be my king.

But I made a little bit of an audible today. I wanted to cement what you heard because I want you to anticipate where we're going. You're going to need to choose who your God is, and today's the day that you can choose Him, and I want to cement that with an exclamation point as we sing a song called Another in the Fire. And we're going to do something different that we've ever done. We're going to lead worship on all campuses from here, so Colorado Springs, give us a little grace, Westminster, give us a little grace. Sing loud. It's going to be an awesome time of worship as we as one body on multiple campuses sing to the Lord and are reminded of the fact that there's another in the fire and His name's Jesus. And you choose Jesus Christ over culture, He goes with you wherever you go. Would you please stand with me?

Father, in this moment, we just praise your name. We thank you for who you are. Lord, we're reminded of the fact that you love us so much that you sent your Son as a

living sacrifice for our sin, an atoning sacrifice, one who paid it all. Perhaps you're here today and say, no, I've been religious, but I don't know that I've ever let Jesus be king of my life, and I need Jesus to be the king of my life. I want to reject those gods. I want Jesus to come in. Here's how you can pray. Lord Jesus, come into my life. Be my king. I repent that I've not followed you. I repent that I've not served you. I want all of you to come into my life. You take over from this moment on. I want your free gift of grace. I didn't do anything to earn it, but you're willing to give it to me. I want that, and I want to grow in you. And for those of you that know the Lord, would you resolve today that Jesus is your king from now until you meet him face to face?

Knowing this, there's another in the fire. There's another in the trial. There's another that's going with you. His name is Jesus, and He loves you with an unconditional love. We give you glory, honor and praise as we sing to you in Jesus' name, amen and amen. Can we give God praise?