

Deliverance

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[0 : 0 0] Daniel chapter 3 we're going to focus really from verse 19 but crucial to what happens in the second half of the chapter is verses 16 to 18 where the friends give their answer to Nebuchadnezzar who requires that they bow down to this idol and their defiance of him that really sets up the drama of this story and it sets up all that happens in the later half of the chapter so then it as I said started this chapter last week and as you know you may know he's using film titles and he started by preaching on this as Goldrush in reference to the big statue now I wanted to come up my own so I decided on deliverance I don't necessarily recommend the movie but deliverance is crucial to what happens specifically the deliverance of God for his people you want sermon in a sentence if you want to understand what's going on here this is about the power of God to deliver his people from this particular fiery trial power of God to deliver his people okay now as I said crucial to what happens here is an answer in a sense from God to a question that's been posed King

Nebuchadnezzar powerful King Nebuchadnezzar what does he say in verse 15 again if you were here you may remember but if you weren't here let's just point this out in verse 15 he says okay when you hear all this music if you're walking about and you hear suddenly the band strike up here's what I want you to do bow down and worship and then he says this he says if you don't you're gonna get chucked in the fire and then he says what God will be able to rescue you from my hand what God's gonna save you because I'm so powerful and I've got such a big furnace and I will throw you in it if you don't obey what God will save you this passage is an answer to that question also in many ways backs up what the friends say in verse 17 look at verse 17 they say Nebuchadnezzar we don't need to defend ourselves we don't just stand here on our own before you because they say if we're thrown into the blazing furnace the God we serve is able the God we serve is able they know the power of their God but then they say and this is really important as well in verse 18 even if he does not we want you to know that we won't bow down now they're not defying the King and trusting in God just because they think God might get them out of this scrape they're gonna obey their God because of who he is because he he is the one that they trust in and so right at this crucial point in their life their life is in danger they put their cards on the table and they say we trust in our God and he is the one that we will obey so there's there's the crux of the drama of the passage and what I want to do this morning is to look at three questions first question is simply what happens and then the second two questions are to do with application first of all how were the original hearers or readers to apply this what would they do with this story and secondly what are you and

I to do with this story how do you apply a story like this to here now so first thing simply what happens let's go through the next few verses first thing that happens is God permits them to fall into the flames they say God can rescue us from the flames I'm sure they didn't want to go into the flames would you have they believe that God could save them but I'm sure they didn't want to have to go there but God permits them to go into the fiery trial so as they define a beacon is now remember maybe can is there's heard about their defiance they didn't do it so obviously I think Derek brought that out last week they just simply didn't obey and they were told on somebody saw what they did and they told the king maybe a can is a kind of gives him a second chance and he says come on I've told you you need to bow down so bow down now and they say no and maybe can is absolutely enraged by what happens here look at look at how he reacts verse 19 maybe can as I was furious says his attitude towards them changed I gave you a second chance you're not gonna take it that's it you're gonna die it says he ordered the furnace to be heated seven times hotter than usual and he commanded some of his strongest soldiers to tie up Shadrach

Meshach and Abednego there was gonna be no mistakes there was no way these guys were gonna be able to escape from what he wanted to happen to them you see in verse 22 the Kingsman was so urgent and the furnace was so hot the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took them he was absolutely enraged now of course if you think about the situation here what's going on what's the dynamic that the King has he has summoned people from all over his kingdom for this demonstration and for his requirement that they would bow down remember I think Derek again they have brought this out the principle that they operated well of with the people that they took into their empire as they conquered people was one of assimilation so they would bring people from different cultures into their land they would allow them to bring their own culture as long as they also bow down as in this instance to the idol as long as they assimilated and be and kind of merged they were quite happy and before all of the people that he summoned the King is defied he's a powerful man and he's probably not eucenus kind of defiance what would you think a noise a despotic ruler more than being defied before a large crowd of witnesses you know this isn't just like they privately said to the King we'd rather not we're not gonna do that in front of all these people the King is defied in front of the Satraps prefects governors advisors treasurers judges magistrates and all the other provision provincial officials we're not going to do it and so he's absolutely enraged and he throws them into the fire now that should mean certain death and so the question then is does God abandon them to the flames does God just allow them to go and die well no in verse 24 and 25 we have a miracle now

Derek I know last week talked about how the greatest miracle in this passage was the faith the courage that these three had in the first place to stand before the King and say we won't do what you ask us to do even though you're gonna throw us into that big furnace that I absolutely agree I was an amazing miracle the way God worked to support them and to enable them to be able to say that in verse 24 and 25 though we have it in some ways the real mystery the amazing mystery of what happens and what God is able to do now you can is there's having a very dramatic chapter here you've already seen how angry he's got he's he's enraged but then presumably he settled down to watch the burning horrible thought really isn't it maybe they've been dropped into an upper pit and he's able to watch lower down in some way and he settled down to watch and to see his power out worked but he jumps up because he gets a surprise verse 24

[7 : 59] King Nebuchadnezzar leapt to his feet in amazement he says hi on wasn't there just three people we put in there I see four I see four people who would have expected that how would you have expected that doesn't make any sense why would there be four people in the flames and more than that as we know none of them were harmed imagine it please don't get too comfortable in one sense with these miracles they weren't running around panicking desperately trying to pull their cords off and scabble back up the pit they were just there now interestingly from the point of view of the way this is written it's from the becanizas point of view isn't it we don't get a little window of kind of conversation between them we don't get right into the drama of what what they're talking about how they're feeling what they're experiencing nebuchadnezzar simply says what he sees and what he sees is four people not three and as he says one of them looks like a son of the gods what's going on here this is the answer to nebuchadnezzar's question see God goes with the three into the fire he permits them to go in they have to go in this instance the

Lord allows for them to be put into this fiery trial but then he goes there with them some people will say and I agree this is a pre-incarnate example of the Lord Jesus coming to be with his people some would say just a messenger of God just an angel but there are different instances aren't there in the Old Testament we don't have time to go into them just now but we're in some way before the incarnation of Jesus in the God that we read about in the Gospels we see the person of God come in human form to be at different times and in different occasions to be with his people and this is one such special occasion quite simply the Lord goes to be with his people and to keep them safe they're safe they're in the middle of a furnace and they're totally safe he has that power he has that ability even though if you were to say if the least we could say this isn't Jesus it's just a messenger from God it's just an angel of some sort God has sent deliverance in the form of a messenger in the form of an angel so what this is telling us and King Nebuchadnezzar himself interprets this thing doesn't he later on he sees how God has sent deliverance for these people that's the that's in some sense is the kind of the very visual miracle that we have this picture of these three people now four completely at ease completely safe in the middle of this huge death pit that's the power of God that's the answer to Nebuchadnezzar's question in verse 15 who can save these people nobody's

gonna save these people God can save these people and he does in this instance power of God to rescue his people so God permits them to go into the fire and then he rescues them and he saves them and then the aftermath of course just gonna look briefly at this what should have happened after this big calling together of all these provincial officials what should have happened well they should have all gone home probably Nebuchadnezzar's desire was that they'd be talking about all that happened they'd be talking about the power of the king they'd be talking about the magnificence of the statue and the grandeur of King Nebuchadnezzar's empire I think they probably went home talking about the miracle that they just witnessed because you see the reaction of the crowd King Nebuchadnezzar calls the three out the interesting we see are here no more of the fourth man he calls the three out and as they come out it says in verse 27 the satraps prefix governors and royal advisors crowded around them there's no hiding from this Nebuchadnezzar couldn't hush it up couldn't pretend like nothing had happened they came out in broad daylight and the crowds crowded around and so their experience was to witness this now what did they make of it I don't know it doesn't necessarily tell us but they were certainly amazed who wouldn't be would they have heard

King Nebuchadnezzar's question who can rescue them would they have known of the testimony of these three friends think it's likely and they see this power of God what can we say the King's response the aftermath of this miracle well he's obviously impressed isn't he has he ever seen anything like this before he received a personal defiance and then he received another jolt to his expectations usually what the King says happens but here the King says doesn't happen he's completely confounded by what happens but he responds and we can't say at this point that he's converted but he is awestruck and he does respond by I think in some ways basically putting God up the pecking order of the gods he says he makes another decree and he says to his people the essentially you must give more respect to this God now Nebuchadnezzar will be dealt with again where we come to chapter 4 by God and we'll see the way in which God deals with him personally there but see the way that God comes into his life and challenges his power and his expectations and what he thinks he can achieve in his own human strength this is an instant an instance of God doing that God coming challenging undermining his ability in his power and continuing to show his power into his life

Nebuchadnezzar is awestruck Nebuchadnezzar gives this new decree and it's just another thing for the people to follow at this point in time also you'll see in verse 30 he promotes them and in the purposes of God here's another instance of these three faithful friends being used by God for his purposes in this civilization in this kingdom so these are people who already have influence they are already being used by God and you know and I would earlier people would have thought I'm dead that's the end of their influence they're gone now they're promoted they're faithful believers who God is now going to use further on in his in his in his work so that's what happens that's the unfolding of this great story probably very familiar to many of you and we see the power of God in this particular remarkable way God doesn't always work like that in this instance he did and it's the power of God to save his people and I want to ask in two different ways how we can apply that first of all I want to look at how how could that be read by the original community by those who would have received that is it just a story about three men no four men in a fire amazing story anybody you could read that to anybody and they'd say yeah it's an amazing story is there more to it than that and then I want to apply it to ourselves what does this say to an Israelite community a long time ago from now who are undergoing massive persecution who are maybe a minority group who are being challenged to forget their identity to assimilate to forget their God or at least to compromise on their God whose way of life is being disrupted and who are maybe thinking is our God still there Yahweh the covenant making and keeping

God is he still there how our lives are so hard is he still there what does this say to them two things first of all the three friends didn't cave in they didn't cave in they were being asked to essentially to deny God because they were being asked to say that God was just one of the gods they could keep their God Yahweh but they had to bow down to this idol that's what they were being asked to do a simile merge in it's easy to do that just do it it's easy they say no we won't do it why don't they do that well because it contradicts the first two commandments God says to those people that he was the one true God and that they were to have no idols they went to just go and worship any old thing that they'd made now they had done that a point in their history hadn't they you remember back to an incident like the golden calf where they were unfaithful and they were rebuked for something like that and the message the message to them then is of the example of these three friends who are

faithful faithful in the face of this very real challenge that they faced but the second thing to the Israelite community to those who would have heard this is that God is able to save God is powerful to save God is the one who brings deliverance for his people God is the one they were to remember and remembrance was such an important thing an important faculty for this group of people as it is for us today remember that he is the one who brought you out of Egypt you were enslaved and he delivered you he is not changed he is the same God and he has in this instance again in this particular example shown his power by bringing deliverance to these three men remember who your

[18:03] God is and don't assimilate don't change so the application then just in passing really for the original community and secondly I want to spend a thirdly I want to spend about time thinking about us and how we apply this a couple of things to talk about first is the first point of us taking a story like this and applying it and seeing how it's relevant is just the same as the way that the original community had to take it and understand it because you're a Christian you probably know where you're challenged to just merge in and become like everybody else not to stand out for Jesus not to say Christ is the way to salvation and in fact there is a need for salvation in the first place because that's almost a heresy here and now that's not broadly speaking what our culture believes that there is a way to be saved and Jesus is the way and so the pressure on us I think is to assimilate you you may well have heard somebody say to you you may be in an experience where maybe at work or maybe in your neighborhood in different ways where you hold fast to who you are as a

Christian and it really it upsets people in different ways so maybe just by saying I'm going what are you doing tonight I'm going to pray me you got the prayer me you go to church on a Wednesday as well as a Sunday well you must really believe that stuff or whatever it is what I think society wants of Christians is to have a an easygoing Christianity a Christian Christianity which says yes it's part of my life but it's not that important yeah I did you know it doesn't really get in the way of who I am and it certainly doesn't make me relate to other people and explain to them that they need this Jesus to that's the taboo in our society I think so you and I face pressure to be to be tapered down tempered down Christians play it down a bit don't be too big for Jesus don't tell people that their sinners and the need any Jesus they call to assimilate where biblical things are at stake and so I think the challenge then for us of course is where our culture would want to change our gospel would want to change the gospel and make it watered down and much less the challenge for us is to take the gospel and change the culture and again to see the power of God at work not in such a physical way but in a spiritual way as we bring the gospel to those who were around so the first thing is simply that same thing of being faithful our God still hasn't changed he's still the same covenant making God who promises salvation for his people and of course we understand that he has done that through Jesus Christ and our call is to remain faithful because he is faithful he doesn't change secondly second thing about our application of a story understanding the fourth man understanding God salvation Christ's presence and the way that God deals with believers who face trouble how do we understand that because again this isn't just a story about a miracle we could leave the story there but then we'd be missing out it's not even just a story about Jesus saving some people from a fiery pit because then we'd be missing out this passage what this does for you and me is it points us towards who Jesus is and it points us towards the work of

Jesus and the deliverance of him first to say though regarding the trials that we'll go through is that Jesus doesn't always save you or me from the trials that we go through in this instance he saved the three friends but he didn't always save people in the Bible from the trials that they faced not everybody was delivered from death God has the power to save but in his will and in his mind as he knows his purposes he doesn't always say that's really important to point out I think he doesn't always save us from the temporal physical trials that we face or from persecution or from the times when we're or Christians or believers are have an awful time because of their faith in God doesn't always say we're first Peter chapter 4 let me just read this verse dear friends do not be surprised at the painful ordeal or some translations say the fiery or deal that has come on you to test you as though something strange were happening to you but rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed don't be surprised I was reading a book this week I just dipped into it really and it's a book written by a guy who's an atheist and he's very much not a Christian and why he's doing in the book is he's challenging he's not just challenging Christianity he's challenging a kind of humanism that says humans are there's no God

we're atheists but humans are great and this guy's even further down the line and he says there's no God and humans are not great we're just animals there's no point to us what he says almost at one point we're like parasites anyway at one point he's writing about the fact that salvation just isn't possible so he's trying to undermine Christianity and he quotes a poet and the poet says this and it's very relevant to this and it has to do with suffering the lines are of what uses it to me that this man has suffered Jesus if I am suffering now of what uses it to me that this man Jesus has suffered if I'm suffering now in other words and you need to need to get this what's he's saying about what he understands the purpose of Jesus to be what he's saying is if I still suffer what's the point in Jesus so therefore his understanding is that Jesus alleviates all suffering now but if we think like that and can I ask a question even as Christians are we sometimes tempted to think like that I believe in Jesus life is still so hard what's he doing why have I thought he would smooth things out for me if we think that by believing in Jesus he'll smooth the cracks of life then we're mistaken remember what the three friends say verse 18 I just point you back to that verse they've said we believe in our God they've said we think you'll save us but then they say this even if he does not we want you to know okay that we will not serve your gods see they weren't obeying God just because they thought they'd get something out of it they weren't obeying God because they thought he'd make everything okay they were away obeying God because he was their Lord and they knew his character and they loved him and they knew his deliverance so suffering for us is something that we are sometimes called to physical everyday suffering or even persecution in different ways and we won't necessarily be delivered from it so understanding suffering I think that's a key thing for us to pick up from this please don't go away thinking wow look how God delivered these people right now I will pray that he will take all my troubles away he may do but that is not the way that we are to expect him to work but finally here's the thing is that when we think about what Jesus did here the way that God worked to deliver what it does is it points us forward because it points towards the ultimate act of deliverance that Jesus completed finished on the cross and that is the spiritual deliverance that every one of us needs and that he can give the spiritual deliverance from our sin I want to ask a couple of questions just as we come to the end what's your greatest fear what terrifies you don't say nothing there is something within us all that we worry about and I suppose in a very tangible way that we would say if

Jesus gave you the opportunity to fix one thing what would it be it may be sometimes that these things become the be all and end all for us and that is the primary focus and that is what we take to God and that is our the main thing that we think Jesus needs to deal with in our lives a particular difficult we have and that's fine I don't mean that we can't pray about our everyday situations to the Lord but another question do you believe do you agree with the Bible's verdict that your greatest most pressing need is to have your sin dealt with but your sin separates you from God that is the that is the if we haven't understood that that is the most pressing thing we could we will ever face the separation that we face from God because of our sin and the separation that we'll face eternally if that's not dealt with then that is the thing we need to get right now that is the thing that we need to understand primarily because as terrifying as this situation was the furnace again which of us would like to be thrown into a huge fiery pit absolutely not of course but we face if you like a fire that is more terrible and that's the honest testimony of the

[28 : 20] Bible that we have to confront isn't it we face a fire that is more terrible but is the just righteous God dealing with our sinfulness we will all meet with God one day and we'll have to give an account of how we dealt with that and we can't do it by ourselves that's the Bible's teaching do we really believe that that's the case that we are sinful people again is that not societal taboo don't talk about that too much but I would say it's so easy to see in other people maybe you know we hate of people in our communities breaking our the harmony of our communities stealing we hear of churches getting broken into see it all the time sin in other people but do we accept the Bible's diagnosis that sin in our own hearts now and forever will separate us from God unless you are

Christ unless your refuge is in Jesus unless he's your deliverer unless he is the one who has saved you and he will save you because he completed the work on the cross and that you believe that he went there if you think about it like this that greatest fire to have the anger of God at sin Jesus went there didn't he on the cross Jesus went there Jesus undertook that terrible ordeal for his people so that they might believe in him and so if that is your trust that you can rejoice with the three friends because you know the deliverance of the Lord and you know the joy of having of having a deliverance and you can say like it says in Colossians chapter 1 once you were alienated from God

and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior but now he has reconciled you he's brought you back together with God by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy that is your experience if Christ is your deliverer to present you holy in his sight without blemish and free from accusation so what a wonderful miracle this story shows us what a great God who is powerful to save what an extraordinary miracle he did back then in time and space but don't not see the greater deliverance to this points towards the deliverance from our sin from Jesus Christ is the great deliverer and my prayer is that he is your deliverer and you know that this morning let me pray Lord we praise you for your work we praise you for the fact that you didn't leave us as our sins deserved we see your commitment towards your people in the pages of your word we see extraordinary ways in which you saved your people great miraculous ways but we also know Lord that you you say that our greatest need is that we'd be reconciled with you that we have our sins dealt with I pray that none of us this morning would go out of here without without dealing with that thank you Jesus that you went to the cross we praise you because you are such a great deliverer who is able and powerful to save and we lift up your name this morning amen