

# The God With Us in the Fire

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[ 0 : 00 ] All right, so quick little plug, now we're kind of jumping into that series, Look to the Rock. The Rock meaning Jesus. If you're new and you haven't been a part of the series, man, you can go back and listen to what we've been going through.

We're going through a bunch of Old Testament stories, which is really cool, and we're finding out how the Old Testament really is. So many things are paralleled and pointing to Jesus and who he is and how he lived and what he did.

And it's just unpacking for us how much deeper the meaning of him coming to earth and dying on the cross for our sins and the way he lived here on earth for us and for our sake.

And what that does, it moves us to want to worship him more, to leverage our lives more for him and to follow him. And so right now we're going to be in the book of Daniel. So if you have a Bible with you, you can go ahead and turn to Daniel.

We're going to be looking at chapter 3. And so what this part of the Bible is about is it's Israel in exile, which means they're no longer in the land that God had given them.

[ 1 : 03 ] A long time had passed. They had been God's people establishing God's land. God had given them a mandate to worship him and worship him alone and be a light and a blessing to the nations and an influence on the nations around them.

But unfortunately, the nations influenced them. And so there was this slide to faithlessness and unfaithfulness towards God. And so it got worse and worse and worse.

And God would warn them. He sent prophets. He said, guys, you need to stop doing what you're doing. You need to wake up and stop sinning and follow me. And they just refused to listen. And over time, finally, God had to get their attention because he loved them so much.

And he said, all right, I'm ripping you out of the land. And he did that through a king named Nebuchadnezzar who came. He was the Babylonian king. And he came and he conquered them. And he took a bunch of people with him out of Israel, out of Judah, and brought them to Babylon with him.

And so this is where the book of Daniel is taking place, in Babylon, which is in modern day Iraq as we know it today. So we're going to jump in. This is a long passage. We're going to read a bunch of verses, but it's a fun, it's like if you went to church as a kid, you probably know this story.

[ 2 : 15 ] It's one of the fun ones. And if you haven't, just like, hey, enjoy this. Ready? It says this, King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold whose height was 60 cubits, which the equivalent is 90 feet.

So nine stories. All right, right? Pretty, pretty sizable statue. And its breadth was six, its width was six cubits. He set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent together the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, all the important people, right?

He called them together, all the people of influence, all the officials of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. He is planning a party, right?

It's like Met Gala Babylon style, all right? Then the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered for the dedication of the images.

[ 3 : 16 ] So he sends it out, they show up, right? You didn't say no to King Nebuchadnezzar. And they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and the herald proclaimed aloud, you are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, that's a bummer, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up, right?

He's turning this into a pretty significant party. It is like turning into this awesome nightclub experience. So there's music going on too here. Whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning, fiery furnace.

Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, they really wanted to make sure we understand how many instruments were going on here. And every kind of music that was happening, all the peoples, nations, and languages, remember King Nebuchadnezzar, he had conquered like most of the known world back then.

And so he's in a place where it's not just Babylonians and Israelites. I mean, there is like nations that he had conquered. He was called in that time king over all kings. He was a powerful dude.

And so you have all these different languages and people there. And he said, okay, when you hear the music, fall down, and they all fell down, and they worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

[ 4 : 43 ] Therefore, at that time, certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews. They declared, so these guys are narcs, right?

They declared to King Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live forever. You, O king, have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the horn, and the pipe, and the lyre, and the trigon, and the harp, and the bagpipe, and every kind of music shall fall down and worship the golden image. And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning, fiery furnace. You know, Nebuchadnezzar, there are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

These men, O king, pay no attention to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up. Then Nebuchadnezzar, reasonable guy, no, Nebuchadnezzar, in furious rage, commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought.

So they brought these men before the king, and Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up?

[ 5 : 55 ] Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn and the pipe and the lyre and the trigon and the harp, and yes, the bagpipe and every kind of music to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good.

But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning, fiery furnace. And who is the God who would deliver you out of my hands?

He is pretty full of himself, right? And why not? Like nobody has been able to defeat this dude. He is ruling over every known nation. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter.

If this be so, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning, fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.

Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated, and he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning, fiery furnace.

[ 7 : 23 ] Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the burning, fiery furnace. Because the king's order was urgent, and the furnace overheated the flame of the fire, killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning, fiery furnace. Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste.

He declared to his counselors, Did we not cast three men bound into the fire? They answered and said to the king, True, O king. He answered and said, But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt.

And the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods. Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning, fiery furnace. He declared, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out and come here.

Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men.

[ 8 : 35 ] The hair of their heads was not singed. Their clothes were not harmed. And no smell of fire had come upon them. Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him and set aside the king's command and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own god.

Therefore, I make a decree. Almost done. Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb.

This guy has an anger problem, right? And their house is laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way. Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

This is God's word. So, lots happening here, right? Lots going on. But remember this. This all is happening in exile, which means that these guys, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they are a minority trying to follow God in a place that doesn't, right?

And we get that. We, as Christians, if you're a believer of Jesus, we are a minority that lives in a place, no matter where you're at in the world, we live as a minority.

[ 10 : 01 ] We live in a land, we live in a place that doesn't believe in God and doesn't follow God. And now it's tempting to read a story like this and see the connection and see the parallels, but come away with the wrong-like takeaway.

And I think in a cultural moment like ours, it's tempting to really misuse this passage, and we can make this about not submitting to authority. I mean, isn't this passage telling the godless leaders about where they can stick their rules and regulations that we don't like?

Isn't that what these guys are doing? Man, we like to turn our bosses or politicians or teachers or parents, the ones that we disagree with, into Nebuchadnezzar. And therefore, it's my duty to stand up and push back.

It's my righteous duty. So if you don't like paying taxes to the government, just convince yourself that it is paying taxes to Babylon. You've given yourself a false righteousness, a false righteous exemption to hide and cheat on your taxes.

And thinking like, who does that? Man, I've known Christians that do that. They do that, and they use passages like this for justification. But that's not what this is about. And the reason is because of Daniel 2.

[ 11 : 11 ] We look at Daniel 2, verse 49, and it says this. Daniel made a request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon.

But Daniel remained at the king's court. So we see these guys, these three main players in chapter 3. But beforehand, we see them. Actually, they're working hard in Babylon. They're getting ranked up.

They're getting recognized. They're helping out King Nebuchadnezzar. They're helping him be better as king. They're helping Babylon be better. And so what do we do with that? I mean, like, we're thinking like, man, what happened to these rebels in chapter 3?

They seem to be doing the wrong things. But actually, no, because they understood what it meant to be exiles and how to live as exiles in Babylon. They had this greater motivation and one that came as a command straight from God.

In Jeremiah 29, verse 4, it says, Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. And it says to do a bunch of stuff, you know, build houses, have kids, you know, do all plant gardens, all that stuff.

[ 12 : 17 ] And then he lands it this way in verse 7. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile. Seek the welfare where you live.

Seek the welfare of the place that you got to call home in this life until you get to heaven. And pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

So these three young dudes, they were doing that. They were being good exiles, which brought them favor and promotion. Now I'm sure that they saw a lot of stuff in the positions that they had, in the place that they lived.

They saw a lot of stuff that they disagreed with that went on in Babylon. But they didn't make that the crossing, the line in the sand moment. They didn't make that the line in the sand moment. What was a line in the sand moment for them was this one.

This was the place they weren't willing to cross, right? Bowing down to a false idol. That's the one. And so we can learn a lot from these guys. Being a good exile, it takes wisdom to know where to draw the line.

[13:23] Not everything is a hill worth dying on. These three dudes, they weren't at the markets picketing against pork because they were Israelites, and that was forbidden for them, right?

No, they didn't do that. And I enjoy going to Lidl to shop, and even if they do make me bring my own grocery bags, you know?

And even if they would probably throw me out, if I asked for plastic instead of paper, whatever, I'm not going to die on that hill. And I'm not going to go whining about it on social media either.

Christians can be too quick to call something they disagree with the golden statue that compromises their worship to God. And I think we can be too quick to spiritualize the rejection of things we don't like, our little personal pet peeves or that kind of stuff.

But in the end, it costs us influence, and we're really compromising our integrity, if we're honest. We try to hide behind like, you know, oh, I'm doing this because, you know, I'm a Christian, and this goes against my religion.

[14:29] See, if you're quick to demonize everything you don't like, people will eventually just tune you out. And you think about with, think about with that with our kids. I see that. I see that. If I am constantly berating my kids, and I'm saying, you know, it's like I'm giving them a 20-minute long lecture.

You know what happened after minute one? They didn't hear anything I said. Right? Eventually, if you just like do too much, people tune you out, which, so what's the big deal?

Well, that's not a good thing, because we want them to hear us, right? We want them to like, at some point, the gospel needs to come out of our mouths for the place that we live, the city that we live, for our neighbors to hear it.

But if they're tuning us out because all we've been is a stick in the mud about everything, guess what? They're not going to be open to that. And that's what we lose. We lose the potential for gospel proclamation.

Man, man, all for the sake of the gospel, we need to learn how to be wise exiles. And you know what? One of the hallmarks of wisdom, according to the book of James, is this.

[15:34] Be slow to speak. Be quick to listen. Which means we don't use social media as a venting platform for cultural, culture war stuff, which we tend to do.

A pastor friend of mine told me recently how we don't like to listen because listening is actually giving up control and authority. Think about that. If you're dominating the conversation, if you're the one, this is like what I'm doing right now, right?

Like I'm the one talking. I'm in control. I'm in this, the authoritative moment. But when we give that up, when we choose to listen, what we're doing is we're giving that position of power away.

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, I think I nailed them all. Maybe there's another one out there I missed. They're like coming up with new ones every year. These things are not reservoirs of wisdom. I mean, it's the modern favorite hangout of Lady Folly, right?

It's her watering hole. And too often, we go there drinking and get intoxicated at her table instead of feasting at the table of wisdom. And wisdom is not found there.

[16:42] Wisdom is found in the Bible. It's found in the Word of God because wisdom begins with fearing God. And that means you realize you don't know a lot. That's the thing about wise people.

Wise people know that they don't know. Wise people are lifelong learners. Wise people are people that can be taught. When you read the book of Proverbs, that's the refrain over and over and over again.

Get understanding. Get instruction. A fool rejects instruction. And so we've got to learn. We've got to grow. We've got to grow in the right things. We've got to get into the Word of God.

Proverbs tells us knowledge of the Holy is insight. Knowledge of the Holy One is insight. And as we grow in that knowledge of the Holy One, it means that we learn who He is.

We learn about what He calls sin and what He doesn't. We learn how He expects us to live as faithful exiles and faithful Christians in this world and not compromising for anything.

[17:43] We get wisdom to draw the right lines in the sand and that starts by reading and filling ourselves with God's Word, not the latest news cycles on CNN and Fox.

Throughout the Bible, as you look at how God's exiles lived in the world but not of the world, you see this better framework for where to draw the line. And I just want to give us a couple of principles, right?

Like something, here's some handles for how you can walk away and like, okay, how do I be a good exile? Here's some simple ones. Okay, first, does God clearly say in the Bible, no?

Okay. All right. How do, where do we stand? That's an easy one, man. Thou shall not murder. Abortion is murder. Okay, that's a clear one. Yeah, that's, we don't do that.

The second thing, does God clearly say yes in Scripture to this? Caring for the poor. Right? Gathering in community. Doing what we're doing here.

[18:42] Yeah, God clearly says, yes, you should be doing these things. So those are the things we do. Now, it's nice when like things are very straightforward like that, but that's not always the case.

There are a host of other issues we can encounter that the Bible doesn't talk about, right? Like, there is nothing in the Bible talking about a holy hand grenade even though Monty Python, you know, made a spoof about it.

But what about things like masks? Yes, I'm going there. Sorry. Don't want to make anyone upset. In this case, what do we do where the Bible has no clear yes or no command here, right?

Well, this is where we can move on to the next thing, the third thing. Now, the first two are the clear. Like, those are the arbiters, right? Like, you know, if it's a clear yes or a clear no, you don't move to number three.

But if it's like a, gosh, I don't know about this, this is when number three can help us. And it's we obey our rulers that God put over us. 1 Peter 2.13 says that. And it's like, honor the emperor who rules over you.

[19:43] Romans 13.1 says, you know what? Like, every ruler that has ever ruled throughout history, including ours and including the ones to come, it is God who is sovereign over the affairs of this world that has put them in there, even the rulers that we don't like or that we may, like, heavily disagree with.

He's put them in there. And then the fourth one, we do what promotes unity in the body of Christ and benefits our neighbors. Ephesians 4.1-3 tells us that.

And Galatians 5.13-14 tells us that. And so there's a clear, easy matrix that you can go out and say, like, how do I figure out how to draw lawns in the sand in this difficult, tough-to-understand world that, like, they're always making new rules, right?

That's what they do. But that's not always the case. Sometimes there is clear-cut direction like it was for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. First commandment, God said, you can't have any other god but me.

Second commandment, God said, don't make any image and worship it or serve it or bound down to it. Obvious line in the sand moment for them. Easy no. Easy no. I wish, I wish everything we faced was as obvious as that, right?

[20:55] And so, yeah, it was easy for them to say no, I mean, except for the consequence, right? Like they were going to face certain death because of that. To follow God in this case meant certain death.

Now, what we do see in this story, the outcome is amazing, right? God came through in an incredible, miraculous way. But we also have to recognize that doesn't always happen.

You know, bad things happen to the faithful, right? And this can mess with us. What do we do with that? You know, what we can see is that for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they didn't obey because they had this 100% guarantee that God was going to bring them through the fire.

God wasn't whispering in their ear and they're like, hey guys, don't worry about bowing down. I got you. You're going to get through this. He didn't come and tell them that. And so, when the ultimatum to worship or die was put to them by the king, this is how they responded in verse 17.

This is brave. This is faith. If this be so, king, our God, whom we serve is able to deliver us from the fiery furnace and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But then look at what they say.

[22:03] But if not, if he doesn't deliver us, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up. I mean, this is beautiful.

They had faith that God could save them and they had faith that believed God didn't have to. Their obedience wasn't based on the outcome. And obedience is always right.

Obedience to God, faithfulness to God is always right regardless of the outcome because God is worthy and he is good. We don't see these three young guys wallowing in self-pity when it's like you're going to get thrown in the furnace.

They're like, God, what happened? Where were you? Why didn't you come through? They're confident in God's ability and his goodness. God could easily rescue them if he wanted to. They recognize that. They even confessed it.

But then they go on to say, even if he didn't, he is still worth obeying and worshiping as the only true God. We are not going to bow down to anybody else whatever the cost may be.

[ 23 : 04 ] He is a God worth living for but he is also a God worth dying for. Thankfully, there's a great result in this story. They get rescued and then they get promoted.

It says at the end of this, God brings them through and then the king's like, whoa, this is blowing my mind. I've never seen anything like that. You know what? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego come out the fire.

Boom. Promotions, raises, like good things are happening for them. It's like the end of a good Disney cartoon, right? Like everything gets resolved happily ever after. Like bam.

Now we got to be careful about this, right? Because we can also draw a wrong conclusion here.

Like we can say like, oh, if we just have enough faith, then it always equals prosperity on the other side.

But sometimes you get blessings and sometimes you do get blessings from God in this life for faithfulness. But we have to hold that open with our hands and say that's not always going to be the case. Some disciples get martyred.

[ 24 : 01 ] Dietrich Bonhoeffer in Nazi Germany stood up against the Germans and said, no, I'm not going to go along with what you're asking me to do as a pastor. I'm going to hold and be faithful. And he died. They killed him.

Some disciples end up staying in prison. If you are a Christian in China and don't recount your faith, you're going to be in prison for a long, long, long, long time and you may never come out. Some disciples don't get rich.

Some prayers don't get answered. So then, if that's the case, what makes faithful obedience to God worth it? Right? If there is no guarantee on these outcomes, what makes it worth it?

Well, consider what happens here. After this miracle, King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4, it says this. He says to all the peoples, all the peoples at his party that were bowing down and worshiping a few minutes ago, he says to them, peace be multiplied to you.

It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me. How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and his dominion endures from generation to generation.

[ 25 : 14 ] man, that is a radical transformation. He goes from worshiping and demanding everyone to worship this false idol to like proclaiming to the whole world about who God is.

That's what he did. The result in Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's obedience is the whole world hearing about the true God. How cool is that? How cool is that for a reward that you get to behold with your eyes?

What a massive transformation in a short time. Nebuchadnezzar goes from making everyone worship that idol to telling everyone how good God is because those three guys decided to be obedient.

And that is a good reason to live in obedience to God and to draw the right lines in the sand because people then have a chance to see the goodness of God through that.

And that actually, if you study church history, that's been the story of our people, our tribe, the Christian church, the Christian faith throughout the last 2,000 years as we've been faithful, as we've been obedient, as we've suffered through persecution for the name of Christ.

[ 26 : 27 ] People, the church has faithfully held out his name through mockery and mistreatment and even martyrdom. And the result is more and more people would get saved because of that.

And we live by faith for that reason. We live by faith so the world has a chance to see Jesus and believe. And that's exactly what these guys' obedience did. Remember, three men went into the service, the furnace.

Sometimes in the service, the heat's on, right? I don't know. So three guys go into the furnace, but then what? Suddenly there's a fourth man.

Nebuchadnezzar sees a fourth man. Who's that fourth man? Well, it says, it describes him this way. He's like the son of the gods. Some translation says he looks like the son of God. Think about this in Isaiah 43, 2.

As they were heading into exile, there's this promise God gives to his people. He says, I will be with you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned.

[ 27 : 36 ] And so I think between what Nebuchadnezzar sees and what God has promised, what we're seeing here is something called the Christophany, this appearance, this physical appearance of Jesus before his incarnation, before he's born in a manger.

So, how does it point to Jesus? Well, Jesus is the Savior who rescues us from the fire. There are so many ways that we could look at this and say, man, this story points to Jesus.

I think one is that Jesus doesn't just show up in the fire. He actually lived among us. That is one of Jesus' nicknames, Emmanuel, God with us.

John 1, 14 says about Jesus, the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only son from the Father, full of grace and truth. Jesus didn't just show up in a fire.

All right? He just didn't show up for a short period of time and then peace out. No, man, he moved into the neighborhood. Like, he came down. He lived among us. He was like us in every way.

[ 28 : 40 ] He took on our weaknesses. He had to grow up, right? He had to, you know, like he grew out of clothes and sandals and all that stuff. I mean, he got the flu. I'm sure he had diarrhea and I'm sure when he was a teenager he had pimples, right?

He was born to a poor family. Right? A poor family. Like, the kind of poor you go to, like in Nicaragua, out in the country, that kind of poor. Where it's just hard, you're just eking out life. It's hard work. You're busting it out just to get enough food to eat every single day. He lived a hard life. Jesus chose to live the full human experience, which included being tempted by sin, but Jesus refused to bow in the face of unbelievable temptation.

Like, think about it. Jesus, he was tempted and then he had this moment where he goes out into the wilderness and doesn't eat for 40 days, which, like, I think at the end of 40 days of not eating, like, I would start sinning like crazy.

Like, even, either with my thoughts or my mouth or like something. Like, I would give in in that weak state like no matter what. He was there and guess who shows up to tempt him, right? Not just some person.

[ 29 : 51 ] The devil himself shows up, like the master of temptation, the best tempter you could possibly think of. And he tempts him in various ways, including one. He says, man, he takes Jesus to a mountainside and he shows him all the kingdoms of the earth and he says, man, if you bow down and worship me right now, short little moment, won't take you any time, just bow down and worship me, you get all this.

I'll hand it all over to you. You get to be king. You get to rule. You get all the power. He's offering the easy route to power at no cost up front.

And that's the temptation for power that we want, right? We want to dominate. We want to flex our power, force our enemies into submission. And man, we would love Jesus to be like that as well, right?

Like, man, don't like that person, Jesus, man, take him out. When our faith looks at people as hopeless, as too far beyond redemption, as like, man, they're never going to get it.

We should just nuke him or judge him from a distance. Well, that isn't Jesus. If that's what we say about people and think God's okay with that, what we bought into is we bought into an Americanized Jesus, not a crucified Jesus.

[ 31 : 09 ] But we see this at this point. He doesn't take Satan's bait. He chose the path of walking among his enemies, right? Like, he walked among us.

We were all enemies of God. No faith in Jesus. Rebels. And he walked among his enemies and he loved them. He moved toward them. He chose the path of suffering and death.

He faced temptation and sin and overcame it for you and for me. and not so he could rub it in our face. Hebrews 4, 15 says, for we do not have a high priest, Jesus, in heaven, our high priest, who was unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sin.

And he went through it so he could be our Savior who could really understand what we face and what we're feeling when we face it.

That's why he has so much compassion for you and me. Like, he just doesn't see what we're going through. He feels the weight of it too. If you're going through something sorrow and grieving it, he feels that sorrow and that grief.

[ 32 : 20 ] If you've been mistreated or abused and slandered, he understands what that feels like, the unfairness of what that feels like, the unfairness and the hurt of betrayal. He understands that pain.

And he's always pushing into us. To let us know that he cares. That he has compassion. That he understands and he wants to give us that kindness. But we don't always let him in, right? We don't always let him into our mess. We think we have to be good for Jesus to draw near. Nope. It says he draws near to the humble. Those who know how broken and desperate and needy they are.

He draws near to those who don't seek to justify themselves by judging others. He doesn't draw near to the self-righteous. And that is why you and I, we need the reality of the cross front and center in our lives.

Because without that, we're never going to truly stay humble. We're never going to stop judging others. And that is where Jesus overcame our greatest problem.

[ 33 : 26 ] On the cross is where Jesus overcame our greatest problem. Which is our greatest fiery furnace that we're ever going to face. Sin and death. And he did that alone.

Jesus faced our greatest fire alone so we wouldn't have to. Now as a Christian, I'll admit, like there's a lot to be worried and concerned about today. Right? I feel you on that.

But Jesus said we shouldn't fear those who can only hurt the body. And then once we die, no longer have power over us. He said, man, what you should fear is God.

You should fear him who after you die has the authority to cast you in the hell. Imagine this. Imagine that a felon is in court facing two charges.

The first charge carries a light sentence, maybe two years, hard labor. The second charge carries the death penalty. Now, if he could be exonerated for only one charge, which one do you think it would be?

[ 34 : 25 ] What do you think he's thinking like? Man, I hope I don't have to do this two years. Of course. We know which one he'd be like, man, I definitely don't want the death penalty. If I can get out one, that'll be the one. That's what Jesus is saying here.

There's something after this life that is significantly worse than all of life's problems you and I face. So don't spend so much time trying to save yourself to make this life better.

Because what you really need is to be saved for the life after this life. And that is what Jesus did. And that is why what he did for us is so amazing.

He stepped in our place. He stepped in to die for us. He went to the cross alone. And then God, the Father, all-powerful, comes down and punishes Jesus, his only son.

Jesus took that punishment for us because he wanted to. And only he can do it. The eternal, infinite Son of God was able to satisfy the eternal, infinite wrath of God, the Father, for us.

[ 35 : 26 ] And the Father and the Son, they didn't do that because they had to, they chose to. They chose to because they loved you and me that much. And in that perfect love, what it says in 1 John 14, 18 and 19 is that we have no more fear of punishment because perfect love casts out fear.

Right? And at verse 19 it says this, we love because he first loved us. God loved us first. He made the first move. We never do. When it comes to God, we never make the first move.

He makes the first move. And that's what grace is all about. That's why we're saved by grace and not by our merits. When you live in the reality of God's grace, when you get this, when you understand how much he did for you, when you live the understanding of the cross and all that means and how he went through the fiery furnace for you and me so we wouldn't have to, you realize that you can't lose.

No matter what comes in this life, you don't gotta freak out. You don't gotta be anxious. You've got a reservation in heaven that's been bought with Jesus' blood.

You have faith in Jesus. Think about this. There is a chair with your name on it waiting for you to fill it at a feasting table at the marriage supper of the Lamb. That's a cool thing to think about.

[ 36 : 44 ] And that is how we fight temptation when it comes. What moved Nebuchadnezzar from idol worshiper to God worshiper? He saw Jesus. And that's where it starts for all of us.

You gotta see Jesus. And that same need to see Jesus never changes. Now as we respond, if we could have Ben and Carl, if you guys wanna come up, I wanna say this to us in the room. If you're not a Christian, man, Jesus died for you. He came. He died a death. You should have died. And I want you to think about that.

There is a life after this life. And it's gonna not stop. And you're gonna show up and you're gonna face the God of this universe one day, the Almighty. And he's not gonna ask you, hey, were you good enough?

He's gonna ask you, did you believe in my son? That's it. Did you have faith? Today's the day. Put your faith in him. Put your faith in this Jesus who loved you enough to come and die for you.

[ 37 : 51 ] If you're a Christian, I wanna ask in the room today, those who are Christian, what has the Holy Spirit been highlighting? We can all get better about living more wisely in exile.

Don't be ashamed if you feel like, I think I might have blown that there, done this, or been unwise in this area. Hey, that's what's great about God. He doesn't write you off.

He says, cool, that's me working on your heart. That's me showing you some stuff. Just repent. Let's move forward together. All good, son. All good, daughter. We can all get better at fixing our eyes on Jesus.

Right? I know, it's so easy to fix our eyes on, like, there's a lot going on in this world. And it's easy to just be, like, so caught up or, like, little squirrels. Like, you know, like, moving our eyes from one thing to the next all the time.

We often miss fixing our eyes on Jesus. We can get better at that. Same thing. God's not out there going like, ah, I'm so sick of this. I'm so sick of you not doing what you should be doing.

[ 38 : 50 ] I mean, he's saying, come. Come on. I want to change your heart. I want to help you. I want to move you toward me. I want you to love what I love. I want you to see what I see. I want you to get into the word. I want you to do those things.

man, follow. Follow this Jesus. Not the Americanized Jesus, the crucified Jesus. We're going to, we're going to take communion in a moment.

Before we do that, I want to, I want to lead us in just a prayer of examination. The Bible says we should examine our hearts before we just jump into taking communion. And so we're going to do that right now. I don't want us to close our eyes.

A few minutes, not, I mean, a few seconds. We're going to take some time. We're going to think, man, just say, but Holy Spirit, what are you highlighting in my heart? What are you calling me to surrender?

How are you calling me to change? If you need to repent, repent. So let's do that right now, silently. Holy Spirit, you've been working in our hearts today.

[ 40 : 24 ] continue to do what you've begun until you bring your work of making us holy into completion.

We pray that in your name. Amen. We're going to take communion. And this is what we do as Christians. Faith in Jesus.

Communion is something we do to remember our Savior who died for us. who went through the fire alone on the cross in our place. And what we're doing is we're taking this and as we do it, it's a confession of sorts.

It's saying that we are partaking in his death. We are partaking in the crucified way of Jesus as we also partake in his resurrection life.

And we're reminded that he gave himself fully for us. He paid the ultimate price. And as we take and eat of this, let that fill you with thankfulness and worship. So let's take the bread that represents his body that was broken and let's eat it together.

[ 41 : 33 ] Let's also take the cup that's blood shed for us and drink together. Would you stand with me and respond with worshiping and singing about how worthy God is?