

**“Just think how stupid the average person is -
then consider that half the people are stupider
than that.”**

George Carlin

Proverbs 1:7

**“The fear of the Lord
is the beginning of knowledge;
Fools despise wisdom and
instruction.”**

Spiritual traps

Pluralism

many systems

each with their
own Messiah

Liberal
“Christian”

Polytheism

one system

with many
Messiahs

Conservative
“Christian”

Prosperity

It's all about
ME,
THIS WORLD,
and NOW!

All of us

Abraham Lincoln



“Nearly all men can
stand adversity, but
if you want to test a
man's character,
give him power.”

***When God blesses us,
He takes a great risk
lest we live for the gift
and not for the Giver.***

*In chapter 2
we left Daniel and friends
in positions of power & privilege.*

Daniel 2

“⁴⁸ Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts, and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.
⁴⁹ And Daniel made request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego over the administration of the province of Babylon, while Daniel was at the king's court.”

DANIEL 3

The setting
vs. 1-7

*Daniel's friends
are faithful*
vs. 8-18

*Daniel's friends
are protected*
vs. 19-30

The setting

- 1. The King makes an image of gold (his kingdom) and demands homage.***
- 2. The furnace awaits all who refuse to bow.***



Daniel 3:7

"Therefore at the time, when all the peoples heard the . . . music, **all** the peoples, nations, and men of **every** language fell down and **worshiped** the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up."

Classic temptations

1. Peer pressure - Everyone was doing it.
2. Loss of privileges - Don't bite the hand that feeds you.
3. Physical comfort - Avoid suffering.

The pressure to rationalize a compromise.

- "When in Rome do as the Romans."
- "If I lose my position, I will lose my influence to use my power for good."
- "God has put me here & Satan is trying to take it away."
- "I must consider the long run as I have much of my life ahead of me."
- "We are the remnant holding the physical welfare of God's people in our hands."
- "Be wise as serpents - God does not want us to suffer for some technicality."

Satan's temptation of Jesus.

Matthew 4

"8 Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory; 9 and he said to Him, **All these things will I give You, if You fall down and worship me.**" 10 Then Jesus said to him, "Begone, Satan! For it is written, **'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'**" 11 Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him."

Nebuchadnezzar Daniel & friends

Both are blessed with a high position by God

Welcomes another God into his system

Refuses to recognize another God

Builds a monument to himself & his kingdom

This is not about us but about the only true God

Anger & Anxiety

Courage & Peace

With which model do we most identify?

Henotheism Greco-Roman Religion's Pyramid of Divine Beings

The One God

Zeus, Jupiter, Unknown God

The great gods

Poseidon, Artemis, Neptune, Venus, Diana, etc.

Local gods

Divine heroes

Humans



Augustus Vespasian

Polytheism (Henotheism) in the church

Jesus Figurehead Messiah

Jesus must be my hope not simply the means to it.

Functional Messiahs

Family Church Money Career Government Country Pleasure

Matthew 6:24

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

What is the point?

1. A worldly environment that makes God's people comfortable may **look and feel safe** but it is not.

Challenge #1 **False security**

DANIEL 3

The setting
vs. 1-7

Daniel's friends
are faithful
vs. 8-18

Daniel's friends
are protected
vs. 19-30

Daniel's friends are faithful

1. Daniel's friends refuse to bow before the image and are reported to the King.
2. They are brought before the King and stand their ground, willing to face the consequences.
3. They place trust in God to deliver them FROM evil.
4. If God does not deliver them FROM evil He is trusted to deliver them THROUGH suffering.

Daniel 3:17-18

“If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

What can we expect of God?

- ✓ **He is able to deliver us from suffering** but may not always do so in the short term.
- ✓ **He gives us power** not to avoid suffering but to be faithful.
- ✓ **He will be with us** sharing our pain and our glory.

1 Corinthians 10

“¹² Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of **escape** also, that you may be able to **endure** it.”

The endurance is not of suffering but of the pressure to compromise faith in order to avoid suffering.

Philippians 4

“¹¹ Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. ¹² I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. ¹³ **I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.**”

Biblical examples

- ✓ **God's hall of fame** - Hebrews 11.
- ✓ **Joseph** - Genesis 50:20.
- ✓ **Job** - Job.
- ✓ **Paul** - 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.
- ✓ **Jesus** - Philippians 2:5-8.

*If there is suffering
it is for a higher purpose.*

What is the point?

1. A worldly environment that makes God's people comfortable may look and feel safe but it is not.
2. Victory is not in **escaping** suffering but in **resisting** the temptation to compromise faith.

Challenge #2 **Confused goals**

DANIEL 3

The setting
vs. 1-7

Daniel's friends
are faithful
vs. 8-18

Daniel's friends
are protected
vs. 19-30

Daniel's friends are protected

1. The furnace is heated to seven times normal.
2. Daniel's friends are thrown into the fire by warriors who themselves were burned to death.
3. A fourth person (like the son of God) is seen in the fire.
4. Daniel's friends are delivered from harm.
5. The king decrees that their God be respected.
6. Daniel's friends are caused to prosper in Babylon.

Daniel 3:25

“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!”.”

Christ in the book of Daniel

- ✓ Chapter 1
- The food & drink.
- ✓ Chapter 2
- The stone.
- ✓ Chapter 3
- The fourth person in the furnace.



Daniel 3

“²⁹ Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation or tongue that speaks anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses reduced to a rubbish heap, inasmuch as there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way.”
³⁰ Then the king caused Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego to prosper in the province of Babylon.”

What is the point?

1. A pagan environment that promotes God's people may look and feel safe but it is not.
2. Victory is not in escaping suffering but in resisting the temptation to compromise faith.
3. God will **not leave us alone** in temptations or suffering but remind us of his love in Christ.

Challenge #3

Feeling isolated

Hebrews 13

“⁵ Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, “***I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,***” ⁶ so that we confidently say, “*The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What shall man do to me?*””

Matthew 6

“¹⁹ Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust **destroy**, and where thieves break in and **steal**. ²⁰ But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; ²¹ for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

God's Spirit does not anoint circumstances or things.

God's Spirit anoints His people to respond to circumstances and use things!

When I look past others & myself to see God as my security and significance.

I gain the freedom to love (forgive, forbear, and bless) others.

Lao Tzu

“Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage.”

God's love for us gives us the strength to obey.

Our love for God gives us the courage to obey.