

SERIES: UNSHAKABLE HOPE IN A SHAKEN WORLD
PART 5: WHEN THE HEAT IS ON

Welcome home, everyone. God loves each one of us so much, and we get the privilege of gathering together with God's family. If you haven't surrendered your life to Jesus Christ, we welcome you home. Jesus loves you, and we deeply love you. We're in a series in which we are looking at the life of Daniel who is a famous prophet in the O. T. of the Bible. We're looking at the 8 greatest tests of his life. Every time Daniel passed one of God's tests, he would be promoted. I have said this to you before in this series that before every blessing that God has for you comes a test. God tests you with stress before He trusts you with success. God's desire is to make sure that every one of us is blessable. What do I mean by that? God wants to make sure that you and I have the character and the maturity and the integrity to handle what He wants to do in your life. So He tests you. Today, I want to look at the test concerning: "What do you do when the heat is on?"

Do any of you remember the Eddy Murphy movie Beverly Hills Cop? That movie came out 32 year ago. The producers wanted a theme song for that movie, so they hired Glenn Frey of the Eagles. They were broken up at the time so they paid him a flat fee of \$15,000 to record a song called THE HEAT IS ON, written by Keith Forsey and Harold Faltermeyer. It was written in 1984 and was # 2 on the Billboard charts in 1985. It went something like this. **(SONG)** "The heat is on. It's on the street. Inside your head on every beat, and the beats so loud, it's deep inside, because the pressure's high just to stay alive. The heat is on." Have you ever felt like that? Sure you have. We all do during certain points in our lives. Did you know that the expression the "Heat is on" is less than 100 years old? It comes from the 1930s in America during the gangster era, and it meant the police are after you. Then it later came to mean you were being interrogated or grilled by the police, then the heat was on. Heat, like a hot grill. We all can understand this phrase. Today this phrase is, of course, an international phrase--the heat is on. It simply means I'm under a lot of pressure. I'm feeling the pressure of a deadline, the pressure of expectation at work, at home, the pressure of peer pressure and things like that. Today, it just means any testing

of your strength, of your recourses and the expectations you have to fulfill. There are a lot of different kinds of heat. But today, in this story, in Daniel 3--if you have your Bible you might open there--we're going to actually look at literally the heat is on when three young Hebrew men face the fiery furnace of a king who has gone mad.

This story of Daniel and his three friends, Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach) and Azariah (Abednego), happens 15 years later than the one we looked at last week. These four men are no longer teenagers. They're in their early to mid thirties. King Nebuchadnezzar, who was the most powerful king in the known world of Babylon, decides to build a gold statue that was ninety feet tall and nine feet wide for all of Babylon to worship. He hoped to use this huge image as a strategy to unite the nation and solidify his power by centralizing worship. This gold statue may have been inspired by his dream. Instead of having only a head of gold, however, it was gold from head to toe.

Nebuchadnezzar wanted his kingdom to last forever. When he made the statue, Nebuchadnezzar showed that his devotion to Daniel's God was short-lived. He neither feared nor obeyed the God who was behind the dream. Nebuchadnezzar had a huge ego, and this test was all about his pride and arrogance, and were the three Hebrews going to remain loyal to their God when they were threatened with death if they did not bow down and worship an idol. This is the same test we all are being faced with in our culture. We're being threatened to worship at the idol of humanism, narcissism, hedonism and materialism. 1 John 2:15-17 put it this way, **“Do not love this world, nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. 16 For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. 17 And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever.”** Please follow along as I read Daniel 3:1-7 **“King Nebuchadnezzar made a gold statue ninety feet tall and nine feet wide and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. 2 Then he sent messages to the high officers, officials, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the provincial officials to come to the dedication of the statue he had set up. 3 So all these officials came and**

stood before the statue King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. 4 Then a herald shouted out, 'People of all races and nations and languages, listen to the king's command! 5 When you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and other musical instruments, bow to the ground to worship King Nebuchadnezzar's gold statue. 6 Anyone who refuses to obey will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.' 7 So at the sound of the musical instruments, all the people, whatever their race or nation or language, bowed to the ground and worshipped the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up."

I. Daniel 3: Similarities to us today

A. The world creates larger than life images for me to worship

Daniel 3:1-4, 6-7

Isn't this so profoundly true today, friends. We don't make them out of gold anymore, necessarily, but the images today that the world wants us to idolize that are larger than life are on movie screens. And we see them, and we idolize these actors and singers that are larger than life on the movie screens and stadiums across the world. We see them in sports stadiums where athletes are treated like gods. We see them in concerts. If you've ever been to a rock concert, they make that person look like they are god. The lights and the smoke and all of the whiz bang stuff. People go, "Wow. They're larger than life. We should worship this person." The internet makes people larger than life. And, by the way, do people still worship gold today? Oh yes. But the idols we have today are not necessarily statues. They are the idols and images that the world wants you to worship today. Physical beauty. That is idolized in our culture. If you're not good-looking, you don't matter in this culture. Only the really sharp and sexy-looking people matter. We worship beauty. We worship sex. That's a very powerful image in our culture. It's a penetrating idol, and it is taking over the world. Wealth. Success. There are things that people idolize. Pleasure. Fame, Power. Influence. Popularity. They are all images and they're just as real. They're not statues on a plain, but people are worshipping them like they are worthy of God. This is the first thing we have in common with the culture of this story that took place over 2500 years ago. The Bible is completely relevant to us

and our needs: **SERFVIP: Spiritually, Emotionally, Relationally, Financially, Vocationally, Intellectually, and Physically**. We are to have no other god before us. Our culture is incredibly idolatrous, just like the Babylonian culture. We have that in common with them.

B. I'm tempted to create a false image of myself to impress others

You and I are tempted every day of our lives to build images of ourselves to create a false impression of ourselves to everyone around us, because we simply want to be loved. You want to be honored. You want to be well known. Here is the dark side of ourselves: You really secretly would like to be worshiped.

Any time I spend time building my own image, that's a potential trap, because image building quickly becomes idol building. The whole idea of our culture is it's all about me. I love Rick Warren's best selling book and his starting sentence which says, "**It's not about you.**" If there's any word that defines the 21st century, it's image. You can hire image consultants today to snaz up your image. You didn't hear of these things a hundred years ago. Character--who and what you really are, has been replaced by image--what you want everyone to think you are. This has gone to all new level with the internet and social media. People every day are parading themselves on social media to be someone they're not. It has become such a joke that when you are communicating with someone you don't know who they really are. I just heard a story on TV where another man stole another man's pictures and built his entire personality around this other man's looks, because, he said, "I can get a lot of women this way." When the man whose image had been stolen confronted the man, he said, "I am doing so much better posing as you with women than myself. There is no way I am stopping." The guy was a total pretender, fake and liar. But it was working for him. That is a great example of idolatry. With our culture that worships at the idol and altar of narcissism, people are simply idolizing themselves. How do you know when someone idolizes themselves? It's simple. They simply believe and act as if the world revolves around them. "You will have to adapt to my schedule. You must adjust to my needs. You all should be thinking about me, not you." That kind of ego, prideful, arrogant narcissism is rampant in our culture

today. So we don't have golden idols, per se, we just make ourselves idols and post it on facebook and want everyone to worship what we do.

C. If I reject the world's idols and image, people will try to expose me

Daniel 3:8-12

In Daniel's day, the threat was that they would be burned to death in a huge furnace. If I reject the world's idols, the world's images, and the whole world says you should worship this, everyone is doing it, everyone loves this and thinks these activities and positions are great--and if you don't particularly think it's great, there are going to be people who want to expose you and burn your reputation. I read an article this week in Christianity today of an ex-Muslim who converted to Christianity and was publicly baptized. This person realized that he was publicly identifying with Jesus Christ. This man's name, which was withheld, said the church agreed to keep his baptism quiet since shariah law demands that converts from Islam be executed. This man flew immediately to his home in Syria after his baptism so he could marry his fiancée. A few weeks later, while still in Syria, he was kidnapped by Islamist extremists--including his uncle and his cousin, who said they learned about his conversion from the church's website. This church had included this man's baptism in its weekly bulletin announcements, and then posted those announcements online. It was the first thing that popped up under his name in an internet search, he told the Tulsa World. For three days, the extremists tortured him, telling him they were going to kill him for his conversion. They tied his arms behind him and beat him, keeping him for hours under a 55 gallon electrified drum that shocked him whenever he touched it, he said. On the fourth day, "They had the video camera out, and I knew that was my day. I'm going to go," he said. But he managed to free his bound arms, and then struggled with his uncle for a gun. He shot his uncle then fled. He lives in the USA, now, but his troubles are far from being over. He suffers from psychological and physical after-effects, and he still gets frequent death threats and cannot ever return to Syria. He has lost their house and two cars, and he won't be able to visit his son who still lives there. His very life is threatened because he won't worship the idol, Allah, and the false religion Islam.

Daniel 3:8-12 **"But some astrologers went to the king and informed on the Jews. 9 they said to King Nebuchadnezzar, 'Long live the king! 10 You**

issued a decree requiring all the people to bow down and worship the gold statue when they hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and other musical instruments. 11 That decree also states that those who refuse to obey must be thrown into a blazing furnace. 12 But there are some Jews--Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego--whom you have put in charge of the province of Babylon. They pay no attention to you, your Majesty. They refuse to serve your gods and do not worship the gold statue you have set up.'"

When you reject the world's idols and images and activities, people will try to expose you.

D. Doing the right things always make some people angry

When you do the right thing, when you do the honest thing, when you demonstrate that you have integrity, character and true compassion and any other Christ-like quality, it's going to make some people around you very angry. Often time's people think, "If I were just perfect, everyone would love me." Loved ones, that just is not true. Jesus was perfect and they killed Him. They put Him on a cross. So even if you were perfect, there are going to be people who want to crucify you. In chapter 2, God made His wisdom known to King Nebuchadnezzar. Here in chapter 3, this story supports the overarching theme of the book of Daniel: In spite of present appearances, God is in control. Whenever God is at work, church, people are going to be angry. They will be angry when you take your stand for His Kingdom, His rule and reign in your life and in the culture. Most likely the reason Daniel isn't involved is because in 2:49 Daniel requested that the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to be in charge of all the affairs of the province of Babylon while Daniel remained in the king's court. Some of the astrologers were jealous of how God promoted Daniel and his three friends. There will always be those who will be jealous, envious and challenged by who you are and what God has done and is doing in your life. I want to say this as plainly as I can to you, dear friends, this morning (this afternoon). When you stand for Jesus Christ and when you stand for integrity at work or any other place, it's going to make some people mad. You and I just need to get over that. Don't worry about it. It's not about you. The king

wasn't used to having people say no to him. Here are the questions I have for you, church: What kind of person are you in the market place? What kind of person are you at school? What kind of person are you in business? Are you stuck up? Are you a kiss-up? Are you flattering everyone around you? Or, are you a stand up kind of person with rock-ribbed integrity. And it doesn't really matter if anyone disagrees; I'm just going to do the right thing. I'll do it humbly. I'll do it politely. I'll do it without bragging about it, but I'm going to do what is right. Why didn't these three Jews bow down to this idol? Because they were honoring the first two commandments of the 10 commandments that God had given them. The number one commandment is "You will not have any other gods before Me." Church, anything that's first place in your life that isn't God breaks that commandment. Whatever is first place in your life is your god. Your business can be your god. Your spouse can be your god. Your boyfriend or girlfriend can be your god. Making money can be your god. Having fun can be your god. Your children can be your God. There is nothing wrong with these things, but they do not deserve first place in your life. The 2nd commandment is, "You will not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in Heaven or above the earth or beneath the waters below, and you shall not bow down to them or worship them for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sins of the father to the third and fourth generation." When Nebuchadnezzar heard that they refused to bow down to his idol vs. 13 says he flew into a rage and told them, "You get one more chance to bow down, or I will throw you into the furnace." The king is challenging their God vs. him. "When I throw you into the furnace who is going to protect you then. Not your God." I want to look now at...

II. Six things to know when I'm in the fire and the heat is on

A. God will walk through the fire with me

In this year of 2017, THE YEAR OF HOPE, as we as a church and as individuals take the risks God is calling us to take, to stand up for Him, God promises you through this story that you won't be alone. God's presence will be with you. Over and over and over again God has promised His presence no matter what you go through if you will trust Him. He says, "I will be with you. I will be with you." After

they threw these three men in the fire in vv. 24-25 Nebuchadnezzar was shocked to see that there were no longer three in the fire, but four men. In vs. 25 he says, "I see four men, unbound, walking around in the fire unharmed! And the fourth looks like a god." Some scholars think it was an angel, others believe that this is an appearance of God's Son, Jesus, before He came to earth as the God man. This is what I believe. It was Jesus walking through the fire with them. Please hear me, loved ones. He has promised you that He will walk through the fire with you. Jesus says, "I will never leave you. I will never forsake you." In Matthew 28:20--what is known as the great commission, Jesus says, "I will always be with you. To the very end of the age. I'll always be with you." In Isaiah 42:2-3, God says this to Israel, but He also says this to us and to you personally, **"When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you."** God says, "You will go through the fire and the flood, and you can count on Me being there with you." When you're going through the heat, first thing to know, friend, is God says, "I will walk through the fire with you." What fire are you in right now? Jesus is with you.

B. God will burn off anything trying to tie me down

Isaiah 48:10-11

This is such a precious promise, loved ones. The king who ordered them to be thrown into the fire now shouts at them, in vs. 26, "Servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here to me." In vs. 27 the Bible says that the high officers, officials, governors and advisers, in other words, all of the elites of the court crowded around them and were stunned when they **"...saw that the fire had not touched them. Not a hair on their heads was singed, and their clothing was not scorched. They didn't even smell of smoke!"**

I want to speak prophetically to you this morning. If you're going through the fire right now, one of the purposes of the fire is to burn off anything that has you bound. The things that are holding you back. Those limitations in your life. He is in the process of burning them off of you. The fire is not meant to kill you but to set you free. Satan would want you to die, but Jesus says, "My fire will set you

free.” Here is a biblical truth. Pain never leaves you where it finds you. When you’re going through life, walking through life, pain picks you up over here, but it doesn’t drop you off there. When it finishes its work in you, it drops you off over here. And hear me, you’re not the same woman, you’re not the same man. Why? Because your character has been tested, refined, grown in the fire. Before the fire you were immature. Now you come out of the fire mature. Over here, you didn’t trust God at all. You’re full of doubts. Over here, now you trust God. You’re full of confidence in Him. Isaiah 48:10-11 says, **“I have refined you, but not as silver is refined. Rather, I have refined you in the furnace of suffering. 11 I will rescue you for My sake--yes, for My own sake! I will not let My reputation be tarnished, and I will not share My glory with idols!”** Hear me, sweet friends: God says to you this morning, “I am putting you through My refining fire so that all of the impurities that are in your life will be burned out so that I can see the reflection of My Son Jesus in you. Take heart. Have courage. I am working My purposes and plans in your life through the fire. I am burning off all those things that have had you tied down.”

C. God will give me a new freedom

Psalm 66:12

Friends, when God is done with you in the fiery furnace, there will be a new liberty and a new freedom. You’re not so bound up. The Bible is full of example and testimonies of this principle. That what people in the world mean to use to enslave you or what people mean to use to entrap you or to destroy you, God wants to use that very problem in your life to liberate you--to set you free from the expectations and opinions of other people. Psalm 66:12 says, **“We went through fire and flood, but You brought us to a place of great abundance.”** Rick Warren recently told the story when his youngest son took his life. Matthew has struggled with a mental health issue out of the womb. He said his son was born with a very troubled mind but a tender heart. Rick says of his son, “He is the most courageous young man I’ve ever met, and he made it 27 years.” But the day he took his life, Pastor Rick says, “It was the worst day of my life. I will never forget it. I was definitely going through the fire.” But as if that was not bad enough, because Rick is so well known, his critics came out of the woodwork through magazine, TV and blogs. They said all kinds of evil and mean things

about Rick and his son. There were people literally laughing at his death on the internet. Rick said, “They were armchair psychologists saying it was my fault, the dad’s fault, and saying all kinds of nonsensical, biased, illiterate, illegitimate, non-sensible stuff. Not only did I have to deal with the grief of losing our son, but for three months I had to deal with this barrage of critics. It was incessant, insane, intense, and brutal, and it was public, and it was constant. I went through hell.” But here is what’s amazing. Pastor Rick says, “Through all of this, I didn’t get singed. I made it through the fire.” When someone asked him, “After all that satan has thrown at you in the last 90 days, how do you feel? Rick said, “Honestly, I feel fearless. I’m just not afraid any more. My attitude is, “satan, that’s the best you have?”

Church, this is the new freedom that Jesus has for every one of us that is in the furnace or about to go in. This is how God creates an unshakable hope in each one of us when our world is on fire and you’re thrown in the fire.

D. God makes sure that I come out unharmed

Regardless of the satanic plan that is worked through the people in our culture just like King Nebuchadnezzar toward Daniel and his friends, God already knew what was going to happen. God has already planned the outcome. He wasn’t worried. Vv. 25-27 tell us that God delivered them out of the furnace completely unharmed. These three young men were unshakable. But God was on their side, and God is on your side when you surrender your life to Jesus Christ, His Son. Whatever it is you’re going through right now, I want you to make this confession with me. **“Jesus, because I surrender my life to You, and I trust You in the furnace I’m in right now, I confess that You are with me, and I will come out unharmed, refined and more committed to You and without fear. It is in Your name I confess and pray.”**

E. It can bring non-believers to God

This is an amazing truth. Church, whatever fire you’re in right now, it can be a testimony and a witness to your non-believing family, friends and culture. It will bring unbelievers to God. How you handle pain, how much you trust God when

you're in pain, when you are under pressure, when the heat is on in your life, will probably be your most powerful witness and your most powerful testimony in your life. You're not much of a witness when everything is going good in your life. But when you're faithful to God, and you trust God implicitly and explicitly when you're in pain, people go, "How are they doing that? How are they handling that? Daniel 3:28 says, **"Then Nebuchadnezzar said, 'Praise to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent His angel to rescue His servants who trust in Him. They defied the king's command and were willing to die rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.'**" This is amazing isn't it? Even the king said, "They defied me, and they were willing to die rather than worship any god except their own God. The king praises and worships the one true God. Question: What are you willing to die for? Have you figured that one out yet? Have you ever sat down and made a list of what you're willing to die for? Why? Because if you don't know what you're willing to die for, you can't really live. You're just existing until you know what's worth dying for. Listen to what the king said after this experience in vs. 29. **"Therefore, I make this decree: If any people, whatever their race or nation or language, speak a word against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they will be torn limb from limb, and their houses will be turned into heaps of rubble. There is no other God who can rescue like this!"** Here is the truth: Who are you looking for to rescue you? Jesus has come, and He had died on the cross, and Father God raised Him from the dead so that you could be saved. He is your only Savior and King. I encourage you to give your life to Jesus today, if you have not done so. As you live your life for Jesus, your life can point people towards Jesus. As He rescues you from the fires you get into, the way you respond can point people to Jesus.

F. God will reward my faith in heaven

The Bible says there will be rewards in heaven for how much you trusted Him on earth. This has nothing to do with your salvation. It has to do with after you're saved. How much you trusted God with the rest of your life. The Bible says we're all builders. You are designing and building your life. You can build a good building or a bad building. God says that you have permission to do whatever you want. You get to choose two things. You get to choose the foundation of

your life. What am I going to build my life on? And you get to choose the building materials. In Matthew 7:24-27 Jesus says His word is liken to building your house on the rock. Jesus and His Word is our sure unshakable foundation so that when the fire and rain come, your house won't fall down. It is Jesus and His Word that is the only foundation worthy of your life. 1 Cor 3:10-15 talks about the material you can use. Vv. 13-15 says, **“But on the judgment day, fire will reveal what kind of work each builder has done. The fire will show if a person's work has any value. 14 If the work survives, that builder will receive a reward. 15 But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss. The builder will be saved, but like someone barely escaping through a wall of flames.”** Paul is not talking about one's salvation. He is talking about great rewards that come by trusting God in the fires of your life. It is by caring more about what God says than what everyone else in the world says. God is watching to see, are you going to listen to Him or are you going to listen to the people around you?

Where are you feeling the heat this morning (afternoon). Is it financial pressure? Job pressure? Sexual pressure? Peer pressure at school or at work? The pressure to conform and do what everyone else is doing and worship the wrong images and idols in our culture? I want to encourage you to pass the test the way these three guys did by standing firm in your faith of the Living God. Lets pray.