

# SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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Far From Home

PART

4

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Stand Your Ground

SCRIPTURE

Daniel 3



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God starts everyone's story at a particular time, with particular people in a place we call home. And suddenly, at various times in our life, the foundations under our feet shift, and we find ourselves far from our place, far from our people, far from home. Where do we find courage when the foundations shake? How do we live in a new place that feels hostile to our faith? How do we live and thrive? We are far from home.

Well, Providence family, it's great to see you this week. I hope you have had a really good week and it really is good to see you. If you're a guest here with us, it's always a joy to have you here as well. If you wonder who are these people, we hope that you leave absolutely certain that the people who meet here, we absolutely love Jesus Christ and believe that he's the almighty one. He's the holy one, he's the humble one, and he's the only one. He's the only savior in the world. And so we love to sing about him and we love to tell people about what he has done and to remind ourselves what he has done on our behalf and He came to the earth and he lived without sin in order to rescue us. He died for our sin.

He actually, there was somebody who has died given their very life for you, and that person knows everything about you, including all of the negative thoughts you've ever thought about him. And he still loves you. So much so that he gave his life for you and for me. And this is who we love to sing to because he is worthy and we have a mission that providence is really given from God. We find it within the Bible. We want to introduce all peoples in the world to Jesus Christ and then to help them to grow, to love and worship him. And so we're really glad that you are here. If you have a Bible in your hand, if you turn with me to Daniel chapter 3, we're in a series in Daniel. We just happen to be up to the third chapter and the first verse. If you don't have a Bible with you, there's lots of Bibles in the chairs near you. And if you don't have one at home, take that home as a gift. That's why they're there. We want you to have one of your own.

As we walk through, we will finish chapter three today, but I want you to know next Sunday, Mother's Day, we're not going to be in Daniel chapter 4. Now, if you ever read the fourth chapter of Daniel, there's a king. He gets really arrogant and all of a sudden he sort of turns into a wild animal and it just didn't seem the most fitting text for Mother's Day, although I know the task of raising kids sometimes might feel like that. It's a heavy rebuke passage to pride. And so we're going to just pause and Daniel for one week next week we'll be in 1 Samuel. But today we are in Daniel chapter 3, and I want to pray before we begin.

Father in heaven, we thank you for your grace and our life and you know that we live in a world that is growing more intolerant to a public confession and a public connection to you, a desire to grow in knowledge of who you are, the desire to serve people to know you, and a desire to take the gospel and to grow and to go to our neighbors and to people around the world who've never heard saying Jesus Christ is the only way for us that is getting more difficult. What we thank you for the privilege. We thank you for the privilege to have a relationship through your son Jesus. And we know it's entirely because of his accomplishments. And so it's our joy. It's our joy to do what the New Testament tells us to do, and that is to be willing to suffer for the sake of Christ and His name.

And so this morning as we open your word, I pray, Father, that you would pour out your spirit upon us, that

you would have full control over this room. You would have full control over our hearts. And for those who have yet to put their trust in, you don't have a relationship with you even wondering what is Christianity? Who is Jesus and what did he do? God, would you make it clear? Would you draw people to yourself? Would you give us understanding to know what these words in the Bible mean? Would you give us wisdom to know how to apply them? And then would you give us courage to actually put it into practice in spite of the inevitable obstacles that will be in front of us? Would you speak through out weakness and glorify Jesus and bring good to your people? We pray in Christ's name, amen.

So Providence, we are seeing today with increasing clarity, the intolerance of pluralism. If you ever wonder heard that word pluralism, it simply means many isms. Okay? Many beliefs, many worldviews, many ideas, many gods seeking to coexist in one place, that's pluralism. And so the world imagines at least the parts of the world that are pluralistic like this image, that peace within a society, within that culture, within our own hearts is sort of the product of embracing every worldview within that culture. And they see that peace is found in embracing every worldview instead of being reconciled to our creator who created the world, the world in which we live.

There's a big difference there. One of them postulates the idea is that there is this lineup of deities and it is up to our sovereign understanding and sensibilities to pick which one is for us. There is another that says that there is one God who created the entire world and he has created rights over the world and that we as a human race sinned against God, broke fellowship with him, offended him, and yet in his unbelievable love for us, he made a decision to provide a way of salvation. And so choosing Christ is an act of humility. It's also the reality and the world that we live in.

I know we all woke up and we imagined that we have a little world, it has a little house, maybe a wife or a husband or friends or children or a job. Our house, our cars, we're like, this is our little world. Friends, listen, you don't have a world, okay? All your little, all our things, our house, our cars, our people, our spouse, our children, they're all God's. They're not ours. They're his. He has creator rights over every single thing. And so when a world comes in and says that the way to peace comes when you adopt every worldview, instead of bowing the heart and knee to the one sovereign creator of the universe and being reconciling to him, which causes peace in our heart with him and then motivation to be at peace with one another, what happens is a pluralistic culture begins to demand that nobody is allowed to claim that their way is the way. And as such, those who hold biblical convictions, whether you speak of them or not, are oftentimes met with fury, cancellation, and even litigation by those who demand within culture that every idea be met with tolerance.

But this problem is not new. In 605 BC, the king of Babylon invaded Jerusalem and exile its people along with a lot of other people, groups from neighboring countries, exiled their people and brought them all together into Babylon. And there was this melting pot of beliefs and ideas and isms, pluralisms. And there was a common rule, and the rule was, everyone's free to worship their gods so long as they all adopted the Babylonian gods and practices and did not say that their God was the only god. And what you find in Daniel chapter 3 is the intolerance of societies that are pluralistic who espouse to have a virtue of tolerance.

Verse 1, “King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold whose height was 60 cubits and its breadth six cubits,” that’s 90 feet tall and nine feet wide. He set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon, and then King Nebuchadnezzar sent to gather, say troops the prefects, the all of the governors and all the counselors treasures, all the justices, all the magistrates and all the officials of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar set up. And then the satraps, the prefects, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before the image that he set up and the herald proclaimed aloud, ‘You are commanded, oh, people’s nations and languages that when you hear the sound of the horn pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music you were to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up and whoever does not fall down in worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace.’ Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn and pipe lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe and every kind of music, all the peoples, nations and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.”

So the truth that I want you to see, which is really the setting of the passage and it’s also descriptive of our own culture, is that when God is disregarded, we set up idols and demand compliance. In the second chapter of Daniel, we were there last week. If you were here, you remember that the same king had a dream and in the dream there was this big image, massive image that he didn’t understand what it meant in the image. It had a head of gold and then its torso and arms were made of silver, and then its legs were made of bronze and further down the legs they were actually iron mixed with clay. We were told in chapter two that each of these parts of this dream of this image represented future world empires that would come onto the scene and succeed each other.

It would all culminate that when Rome was in power, that they would come the special son that would be born of a woman and he would become the cornerstone that would break apart the earthly kingdoms and he would establish an eternal kingdom where he would be the king of kings and Lord of lords. Well, in chapter three, King Nebuchadnezzar perhaps to resist the idea that his amazing empire would ever fall in verse one, he says that he makes an image of gold, but it wasn’t just the head that was gold. It was gold from top to bottom and it was enormous. And this image became a test of religious tolerance and social assimilation. As all the young influential leaders from these different countries were brought to ceremony to dedicate this image, they were all told the same message. “When you hear the sound of all of the musical instruments, you’re to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. And whoever does not fall down in worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace.”

In other words, worship your god and you will worship my god. And if you don’t, you’ll burn. The intolerance of tolerance. Some people, when you think about this happened something a long time ago, right? 605 BC, you think this is old? Is there any relevance to our personal life? When you think about not only our culture? Let’s start there. How is it relevant to us? Well, see, this is scarcely different. The idea of worship your gods and yet you’ll worship my god, and if you don’t, you’ll burn is actually very similar to common messages that we hear today in our culture at different times where different ideologies, different practices are

celebrated when they're given airspace, when they're giving a month, you wear my jersey with the rainbow or you post these particular words on your social media account or you hire according to these standards, and if you don't right, your name will burn. We will cancel you. We will litigate against you, we will disregard you. It's very, very similar. What has happened in the past, Solomon wrote will happen again. And this is precisely what's taking place, the intolerance of pluralistic tolerance.

There's another reason this is so relevant. Many of you, you know where the story's going to go. You're like, I know there's got three really cool guys. I'm going to say "No, we're not doing it, and God's going to save them. It's going to be awesome. We're going to leave. We're so happy." And every one of us, we tend to read these stories and envision ourselves as the hero. We want to be like those guys and we do want to be like those guys. But isn't it interesting how familiar Nebuchadnezzar's practices are and how they resemble our own fallen hearts, who set up images. You notice in this passage he says, you got to fall down others, you're going to go to the furnace and all of this bet King Nebuchadnezzar set up.

One really helpful thing when you're studying the Bible on your own is simply to look at words and phrases that are repeated and in 18 verses in chapter 3, nine different times we find the words King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. It's set up, which means it is as fragile as his life. He's mortal, he will fall, he set it up, it will fall. Every single one of us, however, we set up idols. When we think of idols, we typically think of little statues like wood and stone. "And Brian, I'm not an idolater. I don't have one of those in my room and I don't bow down to it. I don't do that. I'm not into idolatry," but the New Testament says that there's lots of different sins like greed. He calls idolatry. Idolatry is simply anything that we elevate that we set up as a functional savior and we say, "This is going to give me hope if I have it." It could be money, it could be career, it could be ideology, it could be pluralism, it could be personal preference, it could be your sports team or your political party.

Let me show you from Proverbs how idolatry works. Okay? By the way, this is going to sting a little bit, but the Lord loves us, okay? And so there's good news at the end of this. Okay? Proverbs chapter 18, notice what he says. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower and the righteous man runs into it and is safe. A rich man's wealth is his strong city and like a high wall in his imagination." And so as I said earlier, we live in God's world. We're supposed to run to him this world because sin entered the world. It's pretty difficult and it can be terrifying. There's all kinds of things that cause us fear and uncertainty and insecurity in our life. And so we need something that when there is something that would resemble like an enemy army that we see and they're coming, we need to get to a place in the ancient world, you would run to the strong tower which is on the inside of the walls.

It's the safest place that you could be. And so God created the world that you and I would have a relationship with him that in the presence of danger and the presence of temptation, of loss of discouragement, and we think, where am I going to turn to for ultimate hope? He says the name of the Lord, this is his character, is a strong tower and the righteous man runs into it and is safe. We have a place to run, but idolatry begins with a disregard for God. We are scared and we don't run to the tower of his great name and character. And as a result of that, we are still exposed, we're still vulnerable. And so what this does is it creates insecurity. There's

still bad things that come. There's still job loss and cancer and all kinds of challenges that we live in. We're like, "I need something to anchor my hope, to give me peace." And we're like, if we're not going to run to the Lord because we disregard him, what does it say?

It says that we get ingenious. We're like, you know what we need? We need our own wall. We need our own. We need our own city. And once you have this idea of, man, if we had our own strong city and if we had our own high wall, we'd be safe. What it does then is it creates, it moves from ingenuity to effort. Now all of a sudden we have sweat equity in it. We've built something. We've built a career, we've built all kinds of things that these functional saviors in our life, and because we have sweat equity in it, we are emotionally involved. It matters now if it falls over or not, you build a wall that's your idol and someone wants to draw on it with spray paint. You don't like that so much. Someone wants to knock it down, someone wants to criticize it, you don't like it so much. And as a result of that, it leads to one last thing and that is the vilification of any competitors that would speak against, act against or vote against our idol.

So let me explain what I'm saying. You notice he says a rich man's wealth. So the first is how we're supposed to live. You get scared, you run to God, you're tempted, you run to the name of the Lord, you got a problem in your marriage, you run to the Lord, you have any problem, run to the Lord. But when we disregard the Lord, we're like, I need something else. We get ingenious. All of a sudden what happens is we're like, "You know what I need? I just need wealth." And so for some people it's a rich man's wealth, but this is simply one example. This could also be a Democrat or Republican's political candidate is his strong city.

It could be a king's ideology of pluralism is his strong city. It could be an NC State, Carolina, or Duke's basketball team is his strong city, and what you find about every single idol is it's an imaginary high tower that fails you when you need it. And so let me encourage us, application, to recognize and repent of our idols. The question is not if you have one, it's which one do you have? And idols can be very stealth. They don't raise their head up and say, "I just want you to know I'm an idol." And the reason is because idols, they begin as good things and we turn them into God things.

Money can be used for all kinds of good, all kinds of service to humanity, all kinds of benefit, all kinds of wonderful things. And yet if you care too much about it, all of a sudden it becomes a God. And so how do we know? I tend to ask myself a few questions and all these questions really they probe into what I care about most. What does my heart care about most? I ask myself things like What thing in my life if it was withheld from me would elicit my deepest emotions? Not just that I would feel burdened, but I would feel bitter or what thing when threatened would lead me to vilify it's competitor or what thing if loss would lead to deepest despair?

See, sometimes we as, even as a church, Providence, we live in a place and there's just so many amazing things around us and sometimes our heart starts to care a little bit too much for things and all of a sudden our heart grows in those things and we get disappointed by this idol over and over and over again. And yet we keep



going back to it because we don't know any better. And if you keep going back to an idol, one of the things that happens is you begin to vilify different people and as a result of vilifying people, you forsake the commission that Jesus Christ, our king and resurrected savior has given to us, and that is to go make disciples of the people that we want to vilify.

And so let me explain what I'm trying to say. Okay, let's just use basketball, right? Because y'all smile at the very beginning of this illustration. It's going to sting in just a minute, but you're like, "I love my basketball team," and they run out and you got a jersey, you got a color and you're like, "Oh, I love that so much. I just love that color. It's such a beautiful color." And then all of a sudden another color comes out and you're like, "I just wish they'd trip and break their leg." And suddenly what's happened is an idol has been exposed, and here's the reason. There are many of us who love a sports team so much that another team comes out and we forget that those people running out in those jerseys, they have a soul that's going to stand before God almighty and instead of praying for them and for their benefit in life that they would know Christ, we desire their doom.

Let me ask you something. The last time you heard Christ's name being condemned, in the last election night when your candidate didn't win, which one left a deeper mark of oppression on your heart? These kinds of things reveal that we are actually very similar to Nebuchadnezzar. We just don't have the power or money to create as big of an idol, and so let me urge you to ask yourself and whatever it is that the Lord reveals, it's simply this. What thing do I care about too much? That's not the best thing, Jesus Christ. And if you find an idol, repent, confess it to the Lord, take it to Jesus.

Well, the story goes on. The music began and not everyone bowed, and once people recognized there's a few people not bowing, they went to the king and they said, Hey, King, you need to know something. Verse 12, "There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, these men who king pay no attention to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

"Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the King. Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, "Is it true of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I've set up? Now, if you are ready, when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, heart 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 will deliver you out of my hands?"

"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "Oh, Nebuchadnezzar we have no need to answer you in this matter. If this be so our God whom we serve as able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace and he will deliver us out of your hand, oh, King, but if not, be it known to you King, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

The second truth I want you to see is that God, when God is regarded, when he's paid attention to, he gives resolve to stand firm. Nebuchadnezzar, when he hears that three of his star students who have been going through his three year reprogramming of their worldview school that they refused to bow, he knew that he simply could not allow this. He couldn't allow it from the ruling class because they might influence the masses and his attempt to assimilate all these people into this pluralistic worldview within collapse. And so he brings them in. Verse 15 says, "Look, if you're ready, you hear the music to fall down and worship the image that I've set up well and good, but if you don't, I'm going to burn you."

It's an amazing thing that he said, but what's even more amazing is how they responded. Now, let me just remind you real quickly that these men would've been older teenagers. They're talking to the most powerful man in the whole world who's just said as they're just starting their life and influence. If you don't bow to this idol, we are going to burn you alive. You know what they said? Verse 16, "We have no need to answer you in this matter." In other words, our decision has already been made. We've already considered God's justice, truthfulness, and goodness, and we're not going to bow. We've already considered the consequence. We already have made our decision. Then they say, verse 17, "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, oh, King."

In other words, it's what they say, "Look, our God, he has the power to rescue us if he so chooses," and then he says in verse 18, or they say to him in verse 18, "But if not, be it known to you, oh, King that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up. In other words, even if God in his sovereign choice in life would permit that we would be burned alive and he doesn't rescue us in this moment, we want you to know that we've already considered the options. We've already considered his goodness, truthfulness and his justice, and one day we're going to stand before him, whether it's today, at the end of the day, or whether it's 50 years from now, if you allow us to live that long, an obedience to him is better than the absence of pain.

This courage was brought on because they made decisions in advance. And so let me encourage us as a church to determine our decisions before the day of adversity. Friends, if we wait until the furnace is turned up sevenfold to make our decisions about purity about truth, then the heat may be more immediately influential than our memories of God's goodness, truthfulness and justice. We must do our accounting ahead of time. We must consider ahead of time. For those of you who are about to go to college, you need to consider your life before you get to that campus. For those of you who are going to go on a business trip, you need to consider ahead of time what you're not going to do in that hotel room 500 miles from your wife or husband.

Many of us in the room need to consider ahead of the weekend where we're going to invest in the weekend, because there's many, many times in life where not only are human beings tempted, but we have been tempted and friends, if we don't make a conscious decision accounting for his goodness, truthfulness and justice before the heat turns up, then we will not be able to say, we have no need to answer you. But if you've already done your accounting, you can look in the face of all this temptation and say, "We have already made our



decision on this matter.”

Verse 19. “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 is 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. And these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats and their other garments, and they were thrown into the burning fiery furnace. And 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, they fell bound into the burning fiery furnace. Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished. He rose up in haste and he declared to his counselors, ‘Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?’

“And they answered instead of the king, ‘True, oh, King,’ and he answered and said, ‘But I see four men unbound walking in the midst of the fire and they’re not hurt, and the appearance of the fourth is like the son of the gods.’ Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace and he declared ‘Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the most high God come out and come here.’ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the fire and the satraps, prefects, all the governors, all the king’s counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men, and the hair of their heads was not singed, and their cloaks were not harmed and no smell of fire had come upon them.

“Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, ‘Blessed to be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who has sent an angel and delivered as 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, any people nation or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb and their house is laid in ruins for there is no other God who is able to rescue in this way.’ The king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and the province of Babylon.”

What I want you to see here is that when God’s people stand for him, he humbly stands with them. And this is one of the beautiful things that you see in the Bible is that God loves to be with his people. This king, his fury was just ignited seemingly hotter than the furnace, and so he wanted the furnace to be turned up. One of the saddest things about the intolerance movement is the collateral damage even upon people who are loyal, his own soldiers are killed being loyal to the king in this moment, and all of a sudden he’s astonished.

Don’t you love this part? He looks around. Didn’t we just cast three in? Wasn’t there just three? I’m almost certain there was three. Of course there was three. He said his name like 15 times. There’s three. Why do we see four? They’re walking around and that one looks like the son of the gods. Most believe as fourth man was Christ himself, the son of God who occasionally makes appearance in the Old Testament before he took on flesh and was given the name Jesus. You see, Jesus, you think, wait, isn’t it Christmas when Jesus came into being? No. That’s simply when Christ, the eternal second person of the Trinity, the son of God, he took on

flesh. They gave him at that moment the name Jesus, because the name Jesus means he will save them from their sins. It means savior, but he's existed forever. And in the Old Testament, he keeps popping up oftentimes in places where it's he's called the angel of the Lord and this is Jesus himself. And this is important.

We're almost done here. The lesson of Daniel 3, the primary one is not that Jesus, if you trust him, will make sure you don't hurt. There has been all kinds of Christians who have stood up for Jesus and burned in furnaces and on stakes and who have been martyred in all kinds of terrible and tragic ways. The very first martyr after Jesus rose from the dead, his name is Stephen, they stone him to death and it says that as he's being stoned to death, he looks up and it says that Jesus at the right hand of the Father, every other place that says that he's seated at the right hand of the Father. He's standing up with Stephen, and this is the beauty of Jesus. It's not that he takes away your problems. He stands with us in those problems. He gives us the courage and stamina to hold fast, to stand our ground according to his word. And all of this is true, and all of this is emphasized ultimately in something that we talk about here all the time. It's called the Gospel.

You see, Jesus spoke of God's wrath towards sinners in Matthew 13 as a fiery furnace, and it was in the garden just hours before he went to the cross that Jesus began sweating so badly that he began to bleed because the door of the furnace of God's wrath towards our sin was opened, and he was preparing to go in and absorb that wrath so that we wouldn't have to. He went to a cross after he was bound and they nailed into that cross in order for him to give his life in our place so that we would not have to pay the penalty of our sin, he was buried in a grave and he rose from the dead. See, there's no other religious system, the entire world whose God suffers for its people, and God so loved the world that he gave his son, and we know that he gave him to come to die a death we deserved and to rise from the dead. I know all kinds of people who can't see God as loving, and the reason is because they haven't seen God's suffering.

He's so loved that he suffered. This is how you know because he gave his life for you. So let me close before we take the Lord's Supper with just two applications. First, let me encourage those of us who are in Christ to rest in the certainty and flexibility that comes only through the gospel. To make this application point crystal clear, have to compare two things that are not what you desire in life. First, pluralism. Pluralism gives amazing levels of flexibility without any certainty. There is no fixed truth, no standard of righteousness, no standard of justice. Everything is fluid. There's lots of personal flexibility, believe whatever you want to believe. And there's a high level of fear and restlessness towards anyone who feels certain about pluralism is not the answer to the world.

Its opposite extreme is also not the answer to the world, and that's religion. Some of you imagine, "Well, isn't this religion? Aren't we doing religion right now?" I hope not. Jesus saved his most heated and aggressive words for religious people in the Bible. Religion is where we simply aim to be accepted by God, by our performance, and so we create all kinds of stringent unflexible rules and then demand other people, keep them as well. And so religion gives absolute certainty with no flexibility. We see this even when Nebuchadnezzar is absolutely amazed at the miracle in verse 29, what does he say? "You speak a word against the God of these

men, I'm going to rip your arms off." That's not very flexible because it's religion.

The Gospel, however, gives certainty and flexibility, certainty. And then he says there is one creator, one God, one savior, one truth, one standard, one savior, one judge. But then the Gospel also provides this amazing level of flexibility to wait with people and pray for people and be patient with people as we share the gospel with them, giving them time to consider these things as opposed to, "This is it. Accept it now, or I write you off forever." Think about Jesus. The truth that we build our life upon is that it's Jesus on the cross. Loving people who oppose him, not riding them off if they don't believe.

But for those of us in Christ, we can rest in the absolute certainty of what we have believed and we can be absolutely flexible in being patient and praying for people as he moves in their life according to his timetable and not ours. And finally, for those of you who haven't trust Christ, I urge you to bow before Jesus and receive eternal life. There's all kinds of things you can give your life to, but there is simply nothing you can give your life to that gives you hope, peace, and eternal life like Jesus Christ. He is the answer to the world's problems, and he's the answer to yours. And I urge you to place your trust in him by admitting you cannot save yourself by putting your faith and trust in him and confessing him as Lord.

The Bible gives us something. Jesus himself gave us the night before he was crucified, something for us to help us to remember and proclaim and examine our hearts. It's called the Lord's Supper. We're going to take it now, before I give you a moment to pray, the Bible actually tells me to tell you that if you haven't put your faith in trust in Christ yet, oh, we urge you to do so, in which case you're definitely welcome. But if you're not quite ready to do that, to not take it because to take it is to tell other people that you treasure the realities of Christ's body and blood that are behind the symbols of the bread and the cup. And he tells us, for those of us who are in Christ, that if we are to ever take this, that before we take it, we need to confess our own sins so that we can take it with a clear conscience. So let me give you a moment now to do that. Okay?

So Father in heaven, thank you for sending Jesus your son to us, to rescue us from our sin. And thank you that because Jesus came gave us life as a sacrifice, that your promise is true, that if we confess our sin, that you're faithful and just to forgive us of all of our sin and cleanse us from unrighteousness. So we thank you for your forgiveness and we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.

So on the night that Jesus was betrayed, he took bread and he broke it and he gave thanks and began talking about the fact as he had been that his body was going to be broken, that all who had placed their faith in him and his life, his perfect life and his willingness to be broken would enter into a relationship with him. And so if you know God, you have a relationship with God and you know it specifically through Jesus Christ to because of his willingness to give his life, then take and eat in remembrance of him.

And then Jesus took a cup and the cup was full of wine, looked just like blood, and everyone there knew that the Old Testament said that without be shedding of blood, there's no forgiveness of sin. And he took that cup

and he began talking about the fact that his body was going to be broken, so bad that it would bleed, but that blood wouldn't be wasted. It would begin a new covenant, a new covenant that instead of our sins merely only being covered, they would be completely removed as far as the east is from the west. So if you know the guilt of sin, but you also know the joy of a clear conscience because you've been forgiven, take and drink in remembrance of Christ.

Father in heaven, we give you praise. We thank you for sending Jesus to rescue us. And Jesus, thank you for coming. Thank you for being with us. Many of us this week need you in difficult moments, and I ask God that you'll be faithful to your promise and stand with your people. We thank you, father, that we get to sing about something that's true that comes from your own lips, and that is that you will hold us fast. That in spite of the storms and temptations and difficulties and death and loss and all the disappointments in life, that you are still with us and you by your spirit will give us strength to hold fast. And so we sing about that now in faith and appreciation, and we pray all this in Christ's name, amen.

Would you stand? Let's sing.

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