

Conquering Insecurity

Daniel 3:1-30, 1 Peter 3:14-15, Luke 12:11, Hebrews 13:6

Slide 1

Have you ever struggled with insecurity? Maybe you didn't feel attractive enough, competent enough, or successful enough.

Maybe you didn't feel that your opinions were valued, you weren't respected, or you didn't have any influence. Maybe you didn't feel safe and were always asking, "What if...?"

Regardless, most people struggle with some sort of insecurity, especially those who go out of their way to project an image of unshakable confidence and power, like Nebuchadnezzar.

In fact, Nebuchadnezzar was a perfect example of how insecurity cannot be eradicated by wealth, power, popularity, beauty, or success.

Even though Nebuchadnezzar had a vast kingdom, unlimited power, and hundreds of people to do whatever he asked, he still suffered from insecurity.

Last week, we learned Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of an enormous statue that had a head of pure gold, but going down the body the gold turned to silver, then bronze, then iron, and finally iron mixed with clay.

He then saw a rock, cut out of a mountain "*not by human hands,*" strike the statue and crush it to powder, making it like chaff on a threshing floor.

Daniel informed Nebuchadnezzar that the gold head represented him, but his kingdom stood on feet of clay, and all that he built was destined to be broken apart.

The dream haunted Nebuchadnezzar, like some of ours, because we know that no matter how successful we are, it could all crumble away and turn to dust.

So, Nebuchadnezzar set out to prove the dream wrong.

Slide 2

Daniel 3:1, *“King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, sixty cubits high and six cubits wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.”*

The statue was 90 feet tall! Who needs a 90 foot statue unless he’s trying to prove something? The statue was also made of gold, not just the head, but from top to bottom.

Daniel 3:2-3, *He then summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up. So the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before it.*

The author seems to enjoy listing all the government officials who must bow on command before Nebuchadnezzar, as he repeats the list twice.

Then, to dispel Nebuchadnezzar’s insecurity, everyone was called to worship the golden statue by a myriad of Persian, Greek, Afghan, and Hebrew musical instruments.

Daniel 3:4-7, *“Then the herald loudly proclaimed, “Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do: As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up.*

Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.” Therefore, as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp and all kinds of music, all the nations and peoples of every language fell down and worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.”

Now this was not a recommendation, but a command. The consequence for refusing to worship this statue was to be thrown into a blazing furnace.

Nebuchadnezzar was struggling with insecurity, but he wasn't the only one.

Daniel 3:8-9a, 12, “At this time some astrologers came forward and denounced the Jews. They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “...But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up.”

Why do these astrologers care whether three men, out of many thousands, pay no attention to Nebuchadnezzar's command to worship him?

Are they jealous? Are they trying to eliminate the competition for power and influence? No.

It's like people today who delight in sharing the faults of coworkers, or publicly criticize others for things which are none of their business, i.e. like social media shaming posts. Insecurity.

So, when Nebuchadnezzar heard that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego dared to disobey his unreasonable order, he lost it.

Daniel 3:13-15, *“Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?”*”

What’s really happening? Do you ever ask that question when someone gets mad for no real reason? Two people get into it at work, over some small thing. What’s that really about?

Two friends stop speaking to each other, yet they can’t remember what caused the situation. What’s that really about? Insecurity.

Insecurity about power, love, self-worth, competition, or fear of rejection. Insecurity causes conflict and nasty behavior. Nebuchadnezzar is insecure. The astrologers are insecure.

Now, Daniel’s three friends, foreigners and former interns, have every reason to feel insecure, since they’re in danger of being literally fired, but are they?

Daniel 3:16-18, *“Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, “King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”*”

These verses contrast the insecurity of Nebuchadnezzar and his astrologers with the unshakable confidence and resolve of Daniel's three friends. Even facing death, they are solid as a rock.

So, our question is: How can we conquer insecurity?

Slide 3

Well, we need to understand that we must play to the right audience, an audience of One.

Daniel 3:16, *“Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, ‘King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter.’”*

That's priceless. *“We do not need to defend ourselves BEFORE YOU...”*

When you were in school, were there people you had to please? People you had to please to make the team, or people you had to please to get invited to a party?

Now that you're older, maybe you still feel the need to impress your friends, or satisfy the expectations of your spouse, or just prove to yourself that you're a huge success.

Yet these three former interns stand before the king, and say, *‘King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter.’*

Really? All he has to do is nod, and they'll be fired, literally! Why the attitude? Two reasons:

First, the king can't offer them true security since they'll always be subject to the whims of an undependable man.

You see, no matter how much we play along with the irrational demands of others, or how much wealth or success we accumulate, it won't guarantee our future.

Second, if they try to play the king's game, they'll lose themselves.

Luke 12:4-5, *"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him."*

That might sound rather harsh, but it puts it into perspective: *"What is the worst that could happen?"*

Would it be losing a job or a spouse, being rejected by people, or being forced to pinch pennies? Those would be really bad!

But if, at the end of our lives, God says to us, *"Well done, good and faithful servant!... Come and share your master's happiness!"* (Matthew 25:21) That should be enough to carry us through life!

Jesus said, *"What good does it do to gain the whole world (popularity, job security, a few extra bucks), and lose your soul."* So, who can give true security?

Hebrews 13:6, *"So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?"* Play to the right audience—an audience of One. Trust God for lasting security.

That's why, in Daniel 3:17, they tell the king: *"If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand."*

Is God able to save? Of course. Will He? Well, honestly He may not save us in exactly the way we wish!

In the book of Acts, Peter is freed from prison by an angel, but James is killed by the sword. Stephen dies with a vision of heaven opened and Jesus at the right hand of the Father.

Paul had a tough life. He was whipped, stoned, and spent time in prison. His security was not in daily circumstances, but in trusting God.

We hear his confidence and trust in 2 Timothy 1:8-12, *“Join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God... [My suffering] is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.”*

Slide 4

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego demonstrated a faith that was filled with security. Listen to just how secure they really were:

Daniel 3:18, *“But even if our God does not deliver us, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”*

You know the right thing to do, but you’re still questioning: Is this safe? How much will it cost me? Will anyone support my decision? What if this blows up in my face? A tentative commitment leads to insecurity.

A strong commitment, a commitment to do what is right, no matter what the cost, projects confidence and strength.

When we have such a commitment, people will look at us and see that:

- We treat people right when they have nothing to offer us in return.
- We put forth our best efforts, when there are no guarantees it will pay off.
- We stand firm on ethical values, even though it might cost us.

Our commitment to what's right should pay off in earning respect, trust, and confidence, but if not, we'll be secure in the hands of God.

1 Peter 3:14-15 puts it this way: *“Even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened. But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord.”*

As Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego stood before Nebuchadnezzar, the tables were beginning to turn. These three men stood firm in their faith, while Nebuchadnezzar shook with uncontrollable rage.

Daniel 3:19-23, *“Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.”*

But, as I just read, insecurity can cause collateral damage. Due to Nebuchadnezzar's command, it became so hot that it killed the soldiers who threw the three men into the inferno.

And when the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisors saw what the king was capable of doing, they'll immediately fell down before him in worship and awe.

Surely, after all this, Nebuchadnezzar's absolute power was established for all to see.

But that's not what happened!

Slide 5

Conclusion

Daniel 3:24-25, *“Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, “Weren’t there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?” They replied, “Certainly, Your Majesty.” He said, “Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.”*

When Nebuchadnezzar looked into the fire, he saw a fourth man, who appeared to him like “a son of the gods,” or an “angel.” Who was the fourth man? Was it an angel in appearance as a man?

Was it the Son of God, the One who would later come as Jesus of Nazareth? The question is left unanswered, but without a doubt God was with these men in the fire, and they weren’t burned.

Daniel 3:28-30, *“Then Nebuchadnezzar said, “Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king’s command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way.” Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon.”*

Nebuchadnezzar was forced to bow before the God Who is above all. The God who saved His faithful servants. In fact, Nebuchadnezzar is so in awe of God that he elevates the interns to a higher position.

What an amazing story about three remarkable men, and God’s awesome presence with them in time of trouble!

But what's even more amazing is the fact that God promises to be with US in times of trouble.

Now, don't get me wrong, He's always with us, but He's especially with us when we stand up in faith for what's right and when we bear witness to Jesus Christ.

Like Jesus said in Luke 12:11-12, *"When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say."*

We can live with confidence and assurance because we can trust God to be with us in the fire. We don't have to impress people when we live for an Audience of One.