

July 2026 Bible Study by Captain Ryan Boyd

Read Daniel 3:1-30

What do you have to be thankful for today?

When do you find it easy to be thankful?

When do you find it difficult to be thankful?

There are times in our lives when it is easy to be thankful. When we love our job, family, and life, we find it easy to thank God for those things. On the opposite end, when things are not going well for us, we can find it hard to be thankful for anything. But as hard as it might be sometimes, we can still say “God is still good”. That doesn’t mean that your circumstances will magically be better, but we need to recognize that no matter what, God is still in charge and he is still at work and that is the key to being thankful in all situations.

The men in our text today are a prime example of that. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were young men from Israel who had been dragged to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. Life wasn’t too bad for these three. Together with their friend Daniel, they became important officials in the Babylonian empire after graduating from the king’s university with honors. It must have been exciting to hold influential positions in the greatest empire of the day. But Shadrach, Meshach and Abendego’s civil service routine was interrupted one day when they received word that they and every other official were to gather at the plain of Dura where the king had erected a 90-foot statue. This was King Nebuchadnezzar’s idea of a team-building exercise. Every civil servant was to bow down and worship the statue in a show of loyalty. Anyone who disobeyed was to be thrown into a fiery furnace. This was not an idle threat. The king had burned people to death before (Jeremiah 29:22) and not too far from the statue stood a furnace already emitting a column of smoke as if to provide the exclamation mark to the king’s decree.

What is the scariest thing you have ever done? How did you feel before you did it?

What thoughts do you think were going through these men’s minds?

What thoughts would have been going through your mind? Would you have complied?

Surely, the men thought to themselves, “If we don’t bow down to this statue, we’ll die and then what good will we be to the Lord and to his people? We’re so young. We have our whole lives ahead of us. Surely God didn’t bring us here only to let us die so soon! Anyway God will understand if we bow down just this once – especially if we’re just going through the motions. If he does count that as sin, we can always ask for forgiveness.”

But since they realized that their goal in life was not to stay alive but to obey God, they did just that. While everyone else bowed before the king’s idol they remained standing, with pounding hearts no doubt.

It didn’t take long, however, for their disobedience to be reported to the king. He called them forward and demanded that the Jewish men bow down to his statue threatening “...if you do not worship [the statue], you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?” (Daniel 3:15b).

Have you ever had to stand up for what was right in direct defiance to someone in authority?

It was one thing to disobey the king when they had been far from his throne, but what were they to do now as they stood face to face with a ruler who was clearly a man who had no trouble following through on his threats? Remain cool. That's what. In measured tones the 3 men responded: "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up" (Daniel 3:16-18).

What a response! Under no circumstances were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego going to obey the king's command. Yes, they understood the consequences. And no, they didn't have any previous promise from the Lord that they would miraculously survive the fire. But that didn't matter. If God wanted to rescue them, that was his business. Their business was to obey God, no matter what.

These guys knew that no matter what, God was still on the throne. God didn't say "don't kneel, but don't worry – I will save you". They just had to know that God was in charge and that they were supposed to honor him first. These 3 men were ready to forfeit their earthly lives to hold on to their souls for eternity.

This doesn't mean they didn't cringe when they saw the flames shoot out of the furnace in accord with the king's order to make the fire seven times hotter than it already was. The fire was so hot that the soldiers who had custody of the men died when they approached the furnace to throw the men in. But what should have followed: the whoosh of flaming clothes, and the acrid smell of burning hair, and the screams of pain did not come to pass. The 3 men who had been bound tightly with rope were not wriggling helplessly on the floor of the furnace; they were casually walking around as if inspecting an interesting art gallery. And what was more; the 3 men were now 4. Someone else was in that furnace with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego – someone who, according to the Nebuchadnezzar, looked like a son of the gods. Nebuchadnezzar was astounded. He called to the men and ordered them to come out. They did and upon close inspection it was clear to all that their clothes were not burnt, that not one of their hairs had been singed, and they didn't even smell like smoke!!

Think about the last time you were around a fire. How did you smell after being near it for fifteen minutes?

Now, consider the men were IN the fire and came out not affected at all.

Will God do the same for you? Will he keep you from all harm as long as you obey his commands? No. We don't have that promise just as the three men had no guarantee their ordeal was going to end in a miracle. But at the end of the day, can we still say that God is God and He is Good and faithful and just and loving and merciful? Absolutely.

“Even if he doesn’t”. Those are four powerful words if we truly believe them. And just like being thankful, it’s easy to believe those words when things are going well. But when things aren’t going so well, it gets tougher to believe those words. “God will provide a way to pay our rent and get groceries...but even if he doesn’t...” “God will heal my loved one from cancer... but even if he doesn’t...” “God will save my friends from addiction... but even if he doesn’t...” friends, those hard times are no joke. I’ve been there through every single one of those situations. And it wasn’t me saying happily, “and even if he doesn’t”. It was more like me pleading with God to have a good outcome. God...PLEASE heal my loved one. God... please make my money last until the end of the month, God please help my friend get out of addiction... God PLEASE! (pause) But god. Even if you don’t. Even if it doesn’t go my way, God you are still good. You are still merciful and faithful and just. And I still trust in you and know that you are in control. And God I am thankful for the times you have come through for me. God I know that you are able to do this, but even if you don’t I will trust in you and know that you are God.

*When has God answered your prayers in the affirmative? How did that strengthen your faith?
When has God answered your prayers in the negative? How did that strengthen your faith?*

There have been times where God answered my prayers. And there have been times he didn’t. And in both of those times, I knew what it was to be thankful to God. In the good times, it was for answered prayer. And in the not so good times, it was for His peace and comfort and promise that he will never leave. In good and bad times, we can still say, God, even if you don’t, you are still good. You are still merciful and I am still thankful for you and your presence in my life. The sermons we preach with our lives are so much harder than the sermons we preach with our mouths.

So when feel the heat of the furnace, just remember our three friends and their four powerful words: “even if He doesn’t”. Then find peace in the fact that God is so present and he is so faithful. He always keeps his promises and he is always good. And because of that, we always have something to be thankful for in good times and bad.

*What do you need to be thankful to God for today?
How does God show up for you in the hard times?*