

## **Northwest Community Evangelical Free Church**

(April 24, 2016)

Dave Smith

Sermon manuscript

### **Sermon Series: Thriving in Babylon**

(Studies in the life and times of the prophet Daniel)

### **A Short Course on Convictions**

(Daniel 3)

Study #4

#### **Introduction: Preferences...Opinions...Convictions...**

About all sorts of issues, you have *preferences*, *opinions* and *convictions*.

When it comes to PREFERENCES, you'll shrug your shoulders and say, "*OK, we can do it another way. I would prefer to drive home on Bandera Road, but if you want to take Culebra, we can. Whatever.*"

About OPINIONS, you're open to discuss. You'll argue. But you are less easily swayed from carefully arrived at opinions than from mere preferences.

You have opinions about gun control and gun laws, the Texas Lottery, fracking, and climate change. You are not going to quickly change your opinion about these things - and others - if you've spent time thinking about them.

You will state your opinions. You'll respectfully listen to others' opinions and you'll learn from them. But you're pretty well settled on your opinions.

And you bring a whole different level of commitment to the table when the talk turns to CONVICTIONS.

Convictions are those things you will go to the wall for. You'll take a bullet for your convictions.

The list of convictions any of us hold is going to be a short list. And none of us know how we might respond if the test comes. Better men and women than I am have failed to live up to their most fervently held convictions when the chips were down. (See Simon Peter...)

But, on a good day and when I have my wits about me, I hope...

- ...that I would give my life for Jesus.  
His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead has purchased my salvation AND my allegiance. I hope that I would be willing to die for Jesus as I am committed to living for Him.
- ...that I would give my life for people.  
Jesus gave Himself for people and I hope that I would lay down my life for my family, for my brothers and sisters in Christ, for my close friends, and that I would throw myself in front of a bus for an enemy. Until that day comes, I intend to be serious about living for people.

You have convictions. There are things you will live and die for. Your growing faith in Jesus means that there are risks you are willing to take and dangers you are willing to face.

That will be true for any of us, especially in Babylon. And life can be risky here in Babylon.

Today, a business owner who wants to run her business based on her understanding of biblical principles may run afoul of public opinion, and, in some cases, may run afoul of laws.

Christian schools have lost accreditation for their statements of faith and ministry leaders who were formerly welcomed with open arms are no longer welcomed on some school campuses.

Believers who work in media - print or digital, or the film industry - will have to decide where and when to draw lines. What they will and won't do. They may lose work for drawing those lines.

Our friends have differing convictions about where to find ultimate meaning in life, whether it matters what someone believes, what is immoral and what is moral, and more. Differing convictions will sometimes fracture a relationship.

You and I need to figure out how to navigate life in a Babylon where our Bible-based convictions are out of step with much of our culture.

We want to honor God, live wisely and lovingly, and *at the same time* hold to our convictions. That's a tough assignment. But that is what God calls us to do in Babylon. And that's why we are turning again to Daniel. The book Daniel wrote gives us help to do all of this.<sup>1</sup>

### **Prelude: Nebuchadnezzar Builds a Giant Golden Image (2:1)**

Remember. When Daniel and his three friends were taken from Jerusalem to Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar was the king of the Babylonian Empire. He wielded absolute power over his realm and over the peoples who were subject to him.

With no time-stamp given for what happens today, we bring this understanding of this king to this scene.

***[1] Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, the height of which was sixty cubits and its width six cubits; he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.***<sup>2</sup>

A *cubit* in ancient times was about the length of a man's forearm, elbow to finger-tip. Let's call it roughly eighteen inches. So this "image", this statue, was around ninety feet tall.

And it was gold. Not painted gold. It was made of gold, either solid or gold-plated, and the look of this gold image would have been breath-taking.

---

<sup>1</sup> For no reasons given, Daniel doesn't appear in this scene.

<sup>2</sup> A foundation has been discovered, not far from the city of Babylon, on a base eighteen feet square. Oppert, an archaeologist, believes that this is the foundation for Nebuchadnezzar's statue.

The gold domes of the Orthodox churches I've seen in Russia are blindingly bright on a sunny day. Nebuchadnezzar's glittering golden statue<sup>3</sup> would have had the same visual effect.

Scholars have differed about what this "image" was an image of.<sup>4</sup> I believe that Nebuchadnezzar's megalomania argues for the idea that the image was of himself.

The king called all of the power brokers of his empire to see his image.

### **Worship the Image - OR ELSE! (vv. 1-6)**

#### **The Assembled Throng (vv. 2-3)**

***[2] Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent word to assemble the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. [3] Then the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces were assembled for the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.***

Everyone from Supreme Court justices to legislators and governors, from mayors to justices of the peace were there on the plain of Dura.<sup>5</sup>

They are standing at attention before the image on a lush fertile plain situated between the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers.

---

<sup>3</sup> In his campaigns against other nations, Nebuchadnezzar may have accumulated an astonishing amount of gold, sufficient for building such a statue.

<sup>4</sup> One commentator believes it may have been an image of the god, Bel. Perhaps (so Keil) it was a statue that somehow symbolized the Babylonian Empire.

<sup>5</sup> Some have argued that calling all the officials to this dedication would have ground the government to a standstill. Others have suggested that things probably never ran more smoothly. ☺

And with the whole group wondering why they have been called, the loud voice of a herald sounds. Here's the purpose behind the construction of this image.

#### **Assembled and Assigned (vv. 4-6)**

*The commandment (vv.4-5)*

**[4] Then the herald loudly proclaimed: "To you the command is given, O peoples, nations and men of every language<sup>6</sup>, [5] that at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe, and all kinds of music<sup>7</sup>, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up."**

There is no difficulty understanding the command. It is crystal clear. Bow down. And while there is no reward for bowing down, there is quite a penalty for *not* bowing down.

*The penalty for disobedience (v. 6)*

**[6] "But whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire."**

This furnace may have been on the plain already, or it may have been built by the king for the occasion, to ensure submission.<sup>8</sup>

The king will view a refusal to bow down as an insult. He was ready to punish anyone who didn't worship his statue.

---

<sup>6</sup> There is an emphasis on the universality of representation here.

<sup>7</sup> Some of the terms for the musical instruments are seemingly of Greek origin. This has given rise to some to suppose that Daniel was written during the period of Greek domination, centuries after the historical Daniel lived. Such a theory implies that the predictive elements in Daniel are not supernatural in origin. However, a Greek term here or there only lets us know that there was some Hellenistic influence in the Babylonian court, not a surprising thing at all.

<sup>8</sup> Built into a hill, there would have been an opening in the top for dropping lime into the fire. Then, at the bottom of the hill would be an opening for pulling out the fused lime.

And, as we might have expected, the possibility of being thrown alive into a furnace worked like a charm. There was a lot of bowing going on.

#### **(almost) Everybody Worships the Image (vv. 7-12)**

##### **The Submission of the Majority (v. 7)**

**[7] Therefore at that time, when all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe, and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations and men of every language fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.**

Nebuchadnezzar was forcing the highest sort of allegiance from the people on the plain of Dura. He was forcing worship of himself and his kingdom. This is very different from what is going on when you and I recite our nation's "*Pledge of Allegiance*."<sup>9</sup>

We are voluntarily voicing our earthly and temporal allegiance to *this* nation as opposed to any *other* nation. The people before the image were being made to WORSHIP Nebuchadnezzar and to WORSHIP Babylon. And worship they did.

It is hard to picture much joy on their faces as they fell on their knees before the statue. I imagine mostly grudging obedience so as to not get burned. But they bowed. For the most part...

In the middle of the crowd of bowing Babylonians was a small group of young men who stood out because they stood up.

Three men did not bow - and the tattle-taling Chaldeans let the king know about it.

---

<sup>9</sup> The Oath of Citizenship is explicit on this matter. Those who are becoming citizens of the USA are required to state, "I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen..."

## A Troublemaking Minority (vv. 8-12)

*“Remember your decree...” (vv. 8-11)*

**[9] They responded and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king: “O king, live forever! [10] You, O king, have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe, and all kinds of music, is to fall down and worship the golden image. [11] But whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire.”**

You can picture the king nodding his head. *“Yep, that’s what I said all right.”*

And now that he has been reminded of his oath, the Chaldeans break the news about some oath-breakers.

*“Look! Three Jews are standing!” (v. 12)*

**[12a] “There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon, namely Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.”<sup>10</sup>**

If you wonder why they complained to the king about Daniel’s three friends, it probably isn’t *only* their concern for Nebuchadnezzar’s honor.

I suspect they were still smarting from being bested by Daniel and these three friends in the “Reveal the King’s Dream” contest. And they may have resented the fact that these three foreigners held political sway over the province of Babylon.

---

<sup>10</sup> A question that arises rather naturally at this point is, *“Where was Daniel?”* Several suggestions have been made: (1). Daniel might not have been present, which would have saved him from the predicament of having to decide whether or not to bow down to the image; (2). Daniel might have been present and that he, along with his friends, did not bow to the image. However, due to his higher political office, the Chaldeans did not report him. (3). Or, others have wondered - John F. Walvoord among them - if Daniel was present and did bow to the image, not as an act of idolatry, but as his expression of loyalty to the king. I am more inclined to believe that Daniel, for whatever reason, was not present.

Jealousy is at work here. Ugly ambition is on display. They were hoping for personal benefit for getting the Jews into trouble. In their report to the king, they emphasize the insult to the crown of not bowing.

**[12b] “These men, O king, have disregarded you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up.”**

And I’m sure that the response they got from the king was exactly the response they were hoping for. Nebuchadnezzar became enraged (v. 13) and he had the three offenders brought forward.

## The Showdown Where God Showed Up (vv. 13-27)

### Three Friends vs. a King (vv. 13-18)

*The king questions (v. 13)*

**[14] Nebuchadnezzar responded and said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up?”**

Of course Nebuchadnezzar didn’t have to give these guys the time of day. He was the king and he could have had them thrown in the furnace - no questions asked.

The fact that he didn’t do that probably says that he hoped that they would reconsider. He valued their service. He didn’t want to lose these three. Like Daniel, they were choice servants. So rather than take immediate action, he threatened.

*The king threatens (v. 15)*

**[15] “Now if you are ready, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe, and all kinds of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, very well. But if you will not worship, you will immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire...”**

Based on what has already happened with these exiles (looking fit with a vegetables and water diet; telling him his unknowable dream and interpreting it), he probably suspected that they were hoping that their God was going to save them.

Which is why his threat ends with this - **[15B] “and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?”<sup>11</sup>**

Listen carefully to the response of these three young men, because here is where we learn what it looks like to respectfully stand for convictions.

They don’t stutter and they don’t stumble. They speak with confidence and composure. And they don’t start off with that ingratiating, “O King, live forever”.

*They respectfully decline to bow (vv. 16-18)*

No answer needed (v. 16)

**[16] Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter.”**

No long-winded speeches necessary. They knew they would just be wasting their breath on words. They knew that the king wouldn’t be satisfied with anything but their worship.

So, they didn’t go into any great detail explaining WHY they wouldn’t fall down before the image. This was a “Just say ‘NO!’” moment.

Not that they were uncertain of their God power and abilities.

Confession of God’s power (v. 17)

**[17] “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.”**

So, they did have absolute confidence in their deliverance.

God *will deliver them* from Nebuchadnezzar. And we should read that as, “One way of the other.”

On this day they’ll be delivered from the king either by a miracle or through the crucible of suffering. But they will be delivered from Nebuchadnezzar.

Were they absolutely confident that God was going to deliver them from being burned in the furnace? No. Not at all.

Were they convinced that He was able to do that? Yes.

Their confidence in God’s omnipotent power is intact. But they don’t dare to presume that they know exactly what God will or won’t do in this situation.

They weren’t about to try and put God in the box of requiring that He spare them.

Remember. These men had seen thousands of their fellow Jews killed when Jerusalem was sacked. God never promised that He would always protect His people from physical harm. God’s hands weren’t tied. He could deliver however He wanted to deliver.

This is the essence of biblical faith.

It is a firm confidence in what God can do tied to a firm confidence in God’s goodness to do what is right tied to a refusal to never demand anything of God.

---

<sup>11</sup> See Isaiah 36:13-20.

When you are facing some daunting challenge or a terrible hardship, remember Daniel's friends. Unless God has promised in His Word to do this or that, we don't know what He will do.

But we know that He is good. So we trust Him. We hope in Him. And we will obey Him, come what may.

Sometimes it is God's will to deliver through a miraculous intervention. And sometimes it is His purpose to *not deliver* faithful believers from martyrdom. It is sometimes God's plan that we honor Him as we suffer for Him.

As for the king's threats, as for the furnace, these three friends would rather suffer than bow to anyone other than their God.

Regardless... (v. 18)

***[18] 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.***<sup>12</sup>

The path they have chosen doesn't hinge on the certainty of what God will do for them. They won't bow down. Period. They will live as God's people - in Babylon.

Now, while you and I are impressed by their courage and their faith, Nebuchadnezzar was not impressed. He was insulted.

He did not think their stance was *noble*, but *offensive*. He had treated them well in Babylon and this was their thanks? They'll get what's coming to them.

---

<sup>12</sup> Heathenism was so tolerant that it recognized the gods of foreign nations. But all kings required that the nations they subdued should also recognize the gods of their kingdom, which they held to be more powerful than the gods of the vanquished nations. A refusal to pay homage to the gods of the kingdom was regarded as an act of hostility. The refusal of the Jews, therefore, to bow down to the golden image could not appear as anything but opposition to the greatness of Babylon.

## Into the Blazing Furnace! (vv. 19-23)

*Nebuchadnezzar's rage! (v. 19)*

***[19] Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with wrath, and his facial expression was altered<sup>13</sup> toward Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. He answered by giving orders to heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated.***

The king was hot and he ordered the furnace hotter. Now, of course, the furnace would have killed them without superheating it.

But, by adding enough fuel to make it seven times hotter, he was making sure that they will be REALLY dead.

*Nebuchadnezzar's punishment (vv. 20-23)*

The fate of the soldiers (vv. 20, 22)

***[20] He commanded certain valiant warriors who were in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, in order to cast them into the furnace of blazing fire...***

Pity these poor soldiers who had been assigned to throw the three friends into the furnace.

The furnace was built into a hill and was fed through an opening at ground level. The, there was a hole in the top that vented smoke and flames.

And with the fire seven times hotter than normal, the soldiers approached from the top to push Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego in through the opening and ***[22b]...the flame of the fire slew those men who carried up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.***

But, down into the fire these three heroes tumbled.

---

<sup>13</sup> Note the phrasing of the king's angry face. It sounds almost comical, but it surely wouldn't have been at the time.

### The fate of the three friends (vv. 21, 23)

***[21] Then these men were tied up in their trousers, their coats, their caps and their other clothes, and were cast into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire...[23] But these three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, fell into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire still tied up.***

And with that, the drama on the plains of Dura concludes. The great crowd that had just moments before been bowing down in front of the king's image has now seen the fate of those who oppose the king.

We don't know whether the king was thinking, "Good riddance! They got just what was coming to them!" or "Nuts. They were really great servants. Why couldn't they have just bowed?"

But it doesn't really matter. The deed is done. And he saw the whole thing from his viewing spot at the front of the furnace.

The king may have been feeling regret or he may have been rejoicing over the fall of his enemies. But when he kept looking and saw what happened next, he was likely feeling nothing but shock and awe.

### **Thriving with Christ in the Fire (vv. 24-27)**

*The King's gloat turns to stunned disbelief (vv. 24-25)*

***[24] Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up in haste; he said to his high officials, "Was it not three men we cast bound into the midst of the fire?" They replied to the king, "Certainly, O king." [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!"***

The three Jews weren't writhing in agony. They weren't burning. They were walking around in the furnace.

Further, there weren't three but four men in the fire, and one of them seemed like a divine being, "a son of the gods."

It is my opinion and it is the opinion of most Christians who study this passage that this fourth Figure was the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus. This is the second member of the Trinity in human form, present in the fire with these three faithful Jews.

He wasn't visibly present when they were the last men standing before the image. He wasn't visibly present when they told the king, "No, we won't bow." But He is visibly present in the furnace.

So, consider two things with me here.

First, what a gift His presence would have been to these three. God is with them in the fire. And what an encouragement the thought brings to us, today, when we feel the heat of trials. Jesus is with us. He doesn't abandon us in the fire. He is present.

Second, remember what Nebuchadnezzar had said when threatening the three friends - **[15B] "and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?"**

The fire and that statement was a Babylonian slap in God's face. It was the king saying, "I can. YOU can't." to which God says, "I can."

God was miraculously and graciously showing His power to an arrogant king to teach him the first law of the universe: THERE IS A GOD, AND IT'S NOT YOU.

As he took in the whole scene, Nebuchadnezzar is sobered. And he went on to issue another command.

*The king calls the three Jews out of the furnace (vv. 26-27)*

### The three obediently exit the furnace (v. 26)

***[26] Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the furnace of blazing fire; he responded and said, 'Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, come out, you servants of the Most High God, and come here!'***

Of course, they were more than happy to obey. In fact, they were always happy to obey the king - as long as obeying him didn't violate God's command.

And as they exited, the crowds who had been bowing to the statue took notice of the Jews' condition.

The condition of the three (v. 27)

***[27] The satraps, the prefects, the governors and the king's high officials<sup>14</sup> gathered around and saw in regard to these men that the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men nor was the hair of their head singed, nor were their trousers damaged, nor had the smell of fire even come upon them.***

They hadn't "just barely" survived a harrowing ordeal. They didn't even smell smoky. They hadn't suffered third, second, or even first degree burns. Their clothing wasn't even singed.

In fact, the only evidence that they had been in the fire at all was their freedom.

They had been bound so securely with ropes that the soldiers had to carry them to the furnace's top opening and throw them in. But they walked out freely at the king's command because only the ropes that had bound them had been destroyed while they were in the presence of Christ in the fire.<sup>15</sup>

In the book's first chapter, Nebuchadnezzar was sufficiently impressed with the God these Jews served to allow Daniel and his friends to not eat Babylonian food if that would violate their God's commands (1:14-16).

In the second chapter, after Daniel had revealed and interpreted the king's unknowable dream, he declared that their God was a ***[2:47] "a God of gods and a lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries."***

Now, his recognition of God's greatness takes another huge step as he blessed the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.<sup>16</sup>

**Postlude: Nebuchadnezzar Blesses God (vv. 28-30)**

The whole drill on the plains of Dura had been an attempt by Nebuchadnezzar to demonstrate his sovereignty and the might of his empire. Erect a huge golden statue, require that everyone bow down to it - kill anyone who doesn't!

God's miraculous deliverance not only delivered his people from the fire. It delivered the king of the mightiest empire on earth from the silly thought that he was sovereign. King Nebuchadnezzar knows he's been bested by the God of the Jews, and he admits it.

***[28] Nebuchadnezzar responded and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants who put their trust in Him, violating the king's command, and yielded up their bodies so as not to serve or worship any god except their own God. [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,<sup>17</sup> inasmuch as there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way."***

---

<sup>14</sup> It is perhaps noteworthy that the Chaldeans (the original tattle tales) are not mentioned here.

<sup>15</sup> See Isaiah 43:1-2

---

<sup>16</sup> This does not mean that Nebuchadnezzar now knows the Lord. Only that he is making movement toward a growing appreciation of the God of the Jews.

<sup>17</sup> The same punishment for failing to reveal the dream of the king (chapter 2) would now be inflicted on any who failed to honor the God of the Jews.



## **Conclusion:**

These days, you and I aren't forced to choose between death and bowing down to a golden image. But what we have seen today speaks very pointedly to us.

There are images all around us that test our convictions. These images are a collection of beliefs that make up a worldview that is as deadly - and as dead - as Nebuchadnezzar's golden image.

Here is a very partial list of some of the golden images in our Babylon before which many of our loved ones and friends are bowing down:

- Believe whatever you want; there is no one "right" way.
- Never criticize someone else's life choices.
- The key to fulfillment in life is to be found within.
- You only live once.

That's just a sampler. There are others. And these images of a self-sustaining, independent life appear so appealing. They almost glitter.

But they are all dead ends. Jesus contradicted all of them.

***[John 14:6] "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."***

***[Matthew 18:15] "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother."***

***[Matthew 16:25] "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."***

***[Matthew 16:26] "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?"***

When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego stood up when told to bow down they were doing more than rebelling against a king. They were pointing the way to life.

Standing shouted to all those on the plain of Dura, "God alone is worthy of worship. Life is to be found only in Him."

I wonder how many Babylonians on that day saw that all that glitters isn't gold? How many turned to the one, true God and believed in Him, not the shiny but dead image, thanks to three Jews who didn't bow?

How many, today, will see you refuse to bow down to the golden image of the headlong pursuit of personal fulfillment, pleasure, and the good life and will see that there is a better way? I believe that many will see your refusal to follow Babylon as pointing to the life-giving way of Jesus.

Living in submission to our Creator is the path to fulfillment. Living to love those around us is the path to joy.

So, when you serve the poor, give generously of your time, prayerfully consider the invitation to foster or adopt needy children, give to support home or cross-cultural missions, speak the truth in love (even if it hurts), sacrificially love your family, live and work with integrity - you are being a 2016 replica of the three Jews who have been honored for the last twenty-five hundred years.

The golden images our Babylon is bowing down to are dead and deadening. Only God's ways bring life. His ways lead to joy and flourishing. So, we *lovingly* and *respectfully* hold to our God-honoring convictions.

Let's nurture God-in-the-middle friendships. Let's cling to a fervent hope in God - not to this or that outcome. Let's remember that God is with us in the fire.

Come what consequences may, the light we shine by the loving courage of our convictions will honor God and bless the people in our Babylon.