

**Thou Shalt Have No Graven Images.**  
From a message by Brother Eugene Nolt  
Millerstown Mennonite Church  
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I would like to extend Christian greetings to each one this morning.

Brother Mast talked about the reason it took that high-class man so long to feel like he was forgiven because he had to cast off all his clothes, another reason is because he might have had a lot of growth to cut down and idols to get rid of and I believe there is a sense in which that is true.

This morning for a message we would like to think about idols, I would like to think about golden images that we face today.

I trust that I am not being redundant by asking you to turn again in your Bibles to [Daniel chapter 3](#). It was only six weeks ago in a devotional that I shared some from this passage, I spoke of the three Hebrew children as not willing to yield to the King's commands and just a Sunday or two ago we were in the book of Daniel, Brother Joel Garman shared a devotion on Daniel's adherence to his God in spite of the command of the King. When one is assigned a topic like this for in the future, I got to studying and I wanted to share it here this morning.

You may turn in your Bibles to Daniel chapter 3 homeward like to invite even the boys and girls who have their Bibles with them to turn to Daniel chapter 3 as we read this interesting account, it may be a hard book to find, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea Amos, turn to the book of Daniel, also in our devotions this morning we were very close here, we were about 50 miles to the north we looked at the city of Nineveh. In the beginning of chapter 3 tells us that this account took place in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon, and this would be about 500 miles to the east of the city of Jerusalem, it is in the present-day country of Iraq and Babylon is about 50 miles south of this city of Baghdad today.

These interesting stories like Jonah and Daniel and his three friends, are interesting stories of places and people and things, but they are more than

that, they are the actual accounts what God did for His faithful followers in the past and whenever we read these stories and are inspired, yes, we give credit where credit is due, these men were faithful men, but we want God to emerge as the hero in all of these accounts and I think we would like to point that out later on in the message.

King Nebuchadnezzar, as we know him, was an idol worshipper, he had many gods, he spent much time and energy, a lot of money in making beautiful temples. He was a man of war, he fought against Jerusalem three different times, carried away captives, Daniel was carried away in one of those first invasions finally in the last invasion to Jerusalem after it was besieged for a number of years he destroyed, destroying the temple with it.

King Nebuchadnezzar strengthened and enlarged his city, Brother Nevin talked about the greatness of the city of Nineveh, there is different thoughts about big Babylon was but it seems like that even may have been bigger yet. And as it is for King like Nebuchadnezzar, or people that live in America today, when they have a lot of things and they serve a lot of gods and have a lot of idols, they go to bed worrying. He went to bed worrying about the future, what should be hereafter? And we know that is how it works. People seek out the fortunetellers and they want to know about the future and Satan often tells them some things about the future. In this case God came and told Nebuchadnezzar some things about the future, He revealed something about the future by showing King Nebuchadnezzar this big metallic man with that head of gold and chest of brass and so on. (Daniel 2).

Well Daniel was able to tell him what this meant and that it meant that he was the head of gold but that finally it would be destroyed by a stone that had been cut out of the mountain without hands and when that stone hit that image on its feet and that whole thing went to nothing and it blew away like chaff on the threshing floor. And immediately after that chapters 3 starts with King Nebuchadnezzar making an image like a man of gold. Some people think he tried to imitate that man, that image that he saw in his dream, we don't know, some people think that the image looked like himself. But anyway hearing Daniel chapter 3 verse one, I'm planning to read this entire chapter

## Daniel 3:1-30

"Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height *was* threescore cubits, *and* the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. <sup>2</sup>Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. <sup>3</sup>Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. <sup>4</sup>Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, <sup>5</sup>*That* at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: <sup>6</sup>And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. <sup>7</sup>Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of musick, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down *and* worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

<sup>8</sup>Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews. <sup>9</sup>They spake and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever. <sup>10</sup>Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, shall fall down and worship the golden image: <sup>11</sup>And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, *that* he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. <sup>12</sup>There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

<sup>13</sup>Then Nebuchadnezzar in *his* rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Then they brought these men before the king. <sup>14</sup>Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, *Is it true*, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? <sup>15</sup>Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and

dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; *well*: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who *is* that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? <sup>16</sup>Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we *are* not careful to answer thee in this matter. <sup>17</sup>If it be *so*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver *us* out of thine hand, O king. <sup>18</sup>But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

<sup>19</sup>Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego: *therefore* he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated. <sup>20</sup>And he commanded the most mighty men that *were* in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, *and* to cast *them* into the burning fiery furnace. <sup>21</sup>Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their *other* garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. <sup>22</sup>Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. <sup>23</sup>And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. <sup>24</sup>Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonied, and rose up in haste, *and* spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. <sup>25</sup>He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

<sup>26</sup>Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, *and* spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come *hither*. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, came forth of the midst of the fire. <sup>27</sup>And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them. <sup>28</sup>*Then* Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed *be* the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in

him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. <sup>29</sup>Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort. <sup>30</sup>Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, in the province of Babylon."

We have the picture here of a great crowd of people, nations and languages, people travelled from far and wide, took a long journey on a foolish errand but as senseless as was the idol so are the people that worship them.

I would like to think for a few minutes about these three Hebrew young men and about images.

Who were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego? Well they were Israelites, they were from the tribe of Judah, very likely, and their names were Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Daniel 1:19) and their names meant; The grace of the Lord, (Hananiah), He that is the strong God, (Mishael) and the Lord is a help, (Azariah).

I like to think of these men as being men of God, men who were taught and trained in what was right. However they found themselves in Babylon as a direct result of idol worship, maybe not themselves personally, it is very likely even though Israel had turned away from God and worshipped idols that they were still people that had remained true to God and even though it is very likely that these three men were not idol worshippers themselves they were suffering in prison in Babylon because of idol worship.

Turn to Exodus chapter 20.

Likely they knew many of God's commands, the Old Testament and the law is full of commands against idol worship and in Exodus chapter 20 we have the basis for all those other commands. We have in Exodus chapter 20 the 10 Commandments and I'm going to read the first six verses of Exodus chapter 20; [Exodus 20:1-6](#)

And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. [4] Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

I believe that these boys, these young men knew this command of God, their lives were spared providentially, and likely many of the captors carried away from Jerusalem were killed, but this king chose out the best and he spared their lives. And even though they could have felt fortunate to escape with their lives they still did not give in, they had their names changed, they were far away from home and from family but they refused to defile themselves with idol worship. They wouldn't eat the King's meat, we have that story in Daniel chapter 1, it might have been unclean meat, it might have been pork, something that they were forbidden to eat, it might have been meat that was offered to idols, we don't know, but they refuse to disobey the commands of God and to bow to the image in this foreign land.

Well what is an image?

An image is an imitation, it is a copy, an imitation of a person, place or thing, a sculptured figure used as an idol, that's a picture of the image of gold that Nebuchadnezzar made, it was an imitation, it was a copy of a man and it was something that was to be worshipped like an idol.

I found an interesting definition in the dictionary as well of the word idol:

"An idol is an image of a god used as an object or an instrument of worship, an object of ardent or excessive devotion or adoration, a false notion or idea that causes error in reasoning or thinking."

Does that make it relevant to us today?

Something that we give excessive attention to, we pay more attention to it then we should.

I would like to think of some images or idols of today.

In many ways they are similar, we don't have idols, we hardly know what idols are, it is something that we read about, people worshipping idols, setting up images bowing down to them. But in many ways the things that constitute idolatry and things that test us may be too often are in many ways similar. For one, they are tangible, they are things oftentimes that we can see and touch, just as the idols of the Bible times of yesteryear. They take a lot of time and energy, maybe we could say they waste a lot of time and energy.

What good did it do Nebuchadnezzar to put all this gold, this valuable stuff, into an idol? Wasn't that a waste? We would say it was. But that is the same as idols are today, it is still a waste of time and of energy. They appear to be great and awesome in men's eyes and they cause us to worry about the future. The things that Nebuchadnezzar had and worshipped kept him from sleeping at night and he lay awake thinking of what should be hereafter.

The first that I would like to share is what I believe is Satan's top seller.

It is the god of self. And that is the same god that Nebuchadnezzar had. He said: Is this not the great Babylon that I have built? As I read in the Bible dictionary about the city of Babylon it talked about maybe a big pyramid that he built, eight stories high as a house of his god, and up in the very top of that was a chamber for the King himself, and from that eight stories high, and likely you can picture that picture in the Bible storybook at home of Nebuchadnezzar leaning out over the wall and saying: Is this not a great Babylon that I have built?

The god of self. Not a lot changed!

If you want a modern day term we call it humanism. And sometimes people speak about the theory of humanism, and sometimes when this word is mentioned some of us aren't quite sure what all that means, but humanism is really just serving self.

The dictionary said that humanism is a modern idea that believes man is capable of taking care of himself without the help of a divine being, or basically without the help of God, he is able to take care of himself. And it

goes on to say that man thinks if he can think it was all his powers he can do it and he can figure out things by science.

That is humanism.

In some ways the reason that this might be a great threat for today is because of this: Really in a lot of ways we are better off than people of past times, we have more things, so it is partly true that we can take more care of ourselves without God it seems like. So the idol of self is one, that image of today, that tempts us, that faces us, maybe especially youth. It is hard sometimes when you are young and strong and energetic, full of youthful energy, you're capable, you're healthy, it is sometimes hard to feel your need of God, that changes a little bit when you get older or when you get deathly sick and then all of a sudden you become more keenly aware of God.

I read a quote that says: When you have nothing left but God then for the first time you become aware that God is enough.

And I think that is how it works, the god of self, when we have nothing but God, or when we get to the place where we are not able to help ourselves, then we realise that God is really all we need.

This god of self, this idol is a threat to us because we live in a land of plenty and we have our needs met physically, but even in that we forget that our physical needs are a direct result of the mercies of and a direct gift to us from God.

If you don't sense a real need of God then it will be hard to you to sense the real need of the church as well, and you won't appreciate your parents and the direction that comes to you, and on and on and on and you will be tempted to rebel against that. The Bible says rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. ([1 Sam. 15:23](#)) And actually worshipping the idol of self or humanism that produces in us stubbornness and rebellion to what God would tell us, or to what our parents or maybe the church would be encouraging us in.

Some more idols or images that we face today: Always having the newest.

It doesn't matter if it is clothing, and many times when we think of idols we think of vehicles, these are idols that tempt us today, but they get old

and they wear out surprisingly fast. Solomon saw the vanity of the new things and he finally said: There is nothing new under the sun. Everything goes through its courses and what is new today will be old tomorrow.

Another idol is always having the latest things, whether it be inventions or theories or ideas.

For example; the man who is dairy farming, maybe the idea for the newest is organic milk or grazing your cows, or the theories are that the only way to successfully milk cows is to have the least 200 of them, it is the only way, it is the new idea. Or you need a robot, I don't know if there's any robots in Perry County, there are robot tractors now too, and one is going to be soon in Perry County, they are going to show farmers how a tractor can drive by itself. Can that be an idol? Can you spend more interest or pay more attention to that than you ought to? Does it get your mind mixed up into thinking wrongly about ideas or reasonings?

Some people always want to have the best, whether it be John Deere's or Toyotas or Bernina's (sewing machine) or kitchen aids, one or the other might be the best or it might not, but to always be striving to have the best thing, to many of these things, but we can have them for the wrong reasons or with the wrong attitudes, they can be idols to us.

Sometimes we think we need the biggest. We are impressed with size, whether it be Nebuchadnezzar with size, the height of his image or whether it be us with the size of the equipment, what it can do or how fast it can do it. For structures, how tall they are or how many square foot they are or how many tons or bushels they can hold. Is it possible for us today to give too much attention to these types of things? Maybe those things affect the brethren more, and the sisters are more interested in paying sometimes too much attention to the delicate, the intricate, the perfection of the seamstress or the decorating of a birthday cake, becoming so interested, spending too much time in the details or in the perfection.

Is all of this to say God does not expect us to do our best? No, I think God does expect us to do our best but we can't expect to excel or to outdo everybody else in all areas and neither is right for us to try, actually it

constitutes idolatry when we do that, to try to and to spend too much time trying.

What is the goal? To try and do our best to please God or is it to honour and magnify ourselves? Many of these idols relate directly to that, the god of self.

Technology. Whether it be computers or cell phones, they must be tools not toys, not status symbols.

Maybe these are things that affect probably most of us, especially most of us because most of us are younger people. Sometimes when people get a little older, I talked to not an old man but an older man recently, we were talking about things like this technology and I was asking him, he was saying about how people were so impressed by new things and they are taken in by that, and I asked him, I said he is probably past that stage, he is not even so jealous of the new pickup truck that might be manufactured.

Then he said he has a bigger problem with the old things, he is tempted to chase after them spend an undue amount or an excessive amount of attention to antiques. And that can be an idol was well. With a little bit of age and a little bit of maturity we now see the folly of and the faults and weaknesses of some of these new things, they are new ideas but so soon they are proven wrong, they are shot full of holes, they are not what they were bragged up to be, and the new thing that looks so beautiful the newness often wears off, it is not what it looked like. And so now we like the old and tried and proven and we pay unwholesome attention to antiques, I believe it is very obvious that we can, it is a waste of time and energy, it is a waste of money.

Think about some antiques that you have seen. People spend more money for antiques than something brand-new would cost. You know that old tractor that they spend time and time, it is just to look at it, they wouldn't think of taking it out in a muddy field. It is an idol, very obvious. Well let's not get caught up in chasing after antiques in an excessive or an improper way.

Giving excessive attention or devotion to something constitutes idolatry and idolatry is actually serving Satan. The Bible tells us that there is only two masters, we can either serve God or we are serving Satan, it doesn't

matter if it is ourselves, it doesn't matter if it is the newest or the latest, the biggest and the best, it is not serving God it is serving Satan and Satan is a cruel master.

Back in the Bible times these kings and these peoples of years gone by when they served idols they even sacrificed their children. Well it is not a lot different today, people sacrifice and give up and make life hard for themselves because of their idolatry, they make themselves big debts and they ruin their home and in that way sacrifice their children just the same. They sacrifice their marriage, they make problems in the church. ([Leviticus 18:21, 20:2-5](#))

Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego they were free. They stood firm for the truth and for right but in their hearts they were free, they were serving God, they were not encumbered by this idol worship like the King was.

Well lastly I would like to think about facing and relating to them.

Hopefully we are facing these idols, hopefully we're not just bowing down and worshipping, that is the easiest thing to do. We live in idol worshipping America, everyone else is falling down to one thing or another, we need to properly evaluate what we spend our time and energies on and to make sure that what we are doing is not constituting idolatry.

And this is maybe sometimes where it is difficult for us because like I mentioned before many of these things are not wrong in themselves but they can be. What may be a tool for another could be an idol for me.

In Babylon Nebuchadnezzar had on his walls rows and rows of bulls and of dragons I think it was one of their gods. Well it is not just things and machinery and technology and furniture but it could even be animals. Is it possible to pay too much time and attention to your animals, whether it be your cattle or your dairy cows, I believe it is possible to spend more time and attention on these things than you should.

We should seek to protect our brother as well, maybe what could be a tool for me might put a stumbling block or cause my brother to worship an idol, and so we have known of people who have done things or not done things in order to protect and help their brethren.

And in this area I believe it is, you know I can't tell if your car is an idol to you or not and so you might say you just got it because you need is another one and because... so that's all. And yet inside may be it is an idol.

Turn to Jeremiah chapter 17, and this thing of understanding ourselves can be a difficult thing for all of us.

[Jeremiah 17:9](#): "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

Sometimes we don't understand and know ourselves as good as we think or say we do.

[Jeremiah 17:10](#): "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." God knows if the things that I have, all the things that I spend my time and attention on is coming between me and more important things of life. We must look to God and try to discern His will in these areas, another test to understand it if this is an idol for me or if it is not is: Could you give it up?

Think about Abraham. Sometimes we say that people idolise their children, they think more of their children then they ought to and maybe this shows up in how they dress them or what presents they get or give them or stick up for them when they do wrong or make mistakes, they idolise their children, they think more of them then they should.

Think about Abraham. He had one son, the son of promise in his old age and God asked him to give it up, and from that the true greatness of Abraham and his devotion to God alone shines forth and we know from reading the account that it was a hard thing for Abraham to do but we also know that he was willing to do it, and so maybe that could be another test for me or for you. ([Genesis 22:1-9](#))

This thing that I've reasoned and I've convinced myself that is not an idol for me, I don't think more of it than I should, do I spend more time with that then I should, I just have it for a tool, would you be willing to give it up if you would need to?. It can test us and it can help us sometimes understand and sometimes it surprises us when we are asked by our parents, maybe by the church to give something up.

What does the New Testament teach? We touched some verses this morning in Sunday school that spoke directly to this issue. Be not deceived neither fornicators nor idolaters nor....and the list goes on and on. They shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. (1 Cor.6:9). We studied that. And the New Testament says that we ought to flee idolatry. We are supposed to keep ourselves from idols.

### Revelation 21 verse 8

But the fearful, and unbelieving,..... and the list goes on and on and on..and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.”

That is the teaching of the Bible on idols.

Well let's have that, let's have God's view on things, on images, on thoughts and even on attitudes that cause us to think or reason wrongly about issues or to pay more attention to them than we should.

A stand against idolatry often has a price tag.

For these Hebrew children the price tag was high, they were asked to give up their lives if they would not bow, but these Hebrews also teach us that no price is too high.

Again we should be like Shadrach. Meshach and Abed-nego, when everybody around us is falling down and worshipping these things we need to stand firm. Maybe people don't understand us, sometimes maybe we are mocked or misunderstood. The price is not too high for the blessing that is reaped.

Finally in this story, as we think of this story and we think of God's miraculous power in being able to spare Shadrach. Meshach and Abed-nego's lives even in that fiercely hot fiery furnace, they didn't even singe their hair, their coats didn't even smell like fire. A miracle we say. And indeed it is true.

But I would like you to think of the miracle of the grace of God that helped them to stay standing.

Finally which was harder for God to do, to help those men stay standing for what they knew was right even though everybody else was doing

something else, even though the command of the King was urgent? Or sparing them from the fire?

Which was harder for God to do?

Neither. It wasn't any harder for God to keep them from being burned by the fire then it was for Him to help them to stand strong.

And so while maybe sometimes we are tempted today to say that you know God doesn't perform those kind of miracles like He did for Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, it takes a miracle of God's grace to keep us from stooping and bowing and from spending too much time and attention on things that would take our hearts away from God.

Well finally I think that we can be strong and we can face and relate properly to these things as we, like Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, stand together. Let's be standing together.

Do you think Shadrach could have stayed standing if Meshach and Abed-nego would have bowed down? There was probably strength in them standing together.

And in this way I think that we can help each other and there again it points to the value of the church giving some direction on some issues that at times are not morally wrong in themselves. Together as a group of God's people we have agreed that this or that or the other thing should not be an accepted practise among us or should not be an item we should purchase because of how it would lead us away from God.

And so on those issues as we stand together we can be strong and then we can expect God to work the miracle of grace that it takes for us to stay standing against images and even golden images, images that appear to be so great and grand and God in the end will not only spare us but He will be able to, from our lives, put forth a testimony to then known world.

The decree went out that there is no God. The interesting about Nebuchadnezzar is that even though he several times throughout this book got a glimpse of God and His greatness he still went on and on and still kept worshipping his idols.

May we be a witness to those around us of God's saving grace yet today.