HUDSON'S HOPE CHAPEL

Faith in the Fire

July 19, 2026 · Series: Small Stories, Big Faith · Luke Hughes-Bunger

> **Main Passage:** Daniel 3:1-30, selected readings (ESV)
>
> **Big Idea:** Faith says, "God is able," and also, "even if His answer is not what I hoped, I will trust Him still."

Introduction

In *The Martian*, Mark Watney is stranded on Mars with limited supplies, no clear communication, and no obvious path home.

The deeper pull of the story is not mainly his ingenuity. It is the hope that keeps him going. Rescue may still be possible, even though he cannot yet see what rescue will look like.

That connects with real life. There are seasons where rescue feels out of sight. We keep praying, but the diagnosis has not changed. The relationship is still strained. The burden has not lifted.

Daniel 3 gives us a picture of faith in that place: not fatalism, not presumption, but trust that keeps going because God is able and God is good.

1. Idols Demand Public Allegiance

Daniel 3:1, 4-6

Nebuchadnezzar builds a massive golden image and commands the peoples, nations, and languages to bow when the music begins.

This is not merely private religion. It is public allegiance.

The furnace is the king's threat: bow, or burn. Worship, or suffer. Give your allegiance here, or lose what you love.

Idolatry does not always begin with a strange statue. Often, it begins with pressure:

- Social pressure
- Financial pressure
- Emotional pressure
- The pressure to fit in, keep quiet, protect yourself, or regain control

The question is not only, "Would I bow before a golden statue?"

The deeper question is: what has the power to command my trust, my attention, and my heart when pressure rises?

Good desires can become ruling desires. And when they do, they begin to demand worship.

The furnace is real. But the idol is not God.

2. Faith Trusts God Without Presuming on Him

Daniel 3:12, 15-18

Nebuchadnezzar gives Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego another chance to bow. Then he asks, "And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?"

Their answer is the centre of the passage:

> *"Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace... But if not... we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."*

The ESV says, "But if not." Other translations bring out the same idea with the words "even if."

God is able.

But even if not.

Faith avoids two errors:

First, unbelieving resignation. This says, "God probably will not act anyway, so why pray?" It sounds like surrender, but underneath it may be despair.

Second, presumption. This says, "If I believe hard enough, God must give me the outcome I have chosen." That makes the outcome the test of God's goodness.

Biblical faith is different.

It prays honestly. It asks boldly. It trusts deeply. And when God gives peace to yield, it rests there too.

Jesus teaches us this in Gethsemane: "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me... Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."

That is not fatalism. That is trust.

3. God Is With His People in the Fire

Daniel 3:24-25

Nebuchadnezzar looks into the furnace and sees four men, unbound and unharmed, walking in the midst of the fire.

The Lord delivers His servants. The ropes burn, but they do not.

And the wonder of the passage is not only that they are rescued, but that they are not alone.

Nebuchadnezzar does not fully understand what he is seeing, but as Christian readers we can say this: God is present with His people in the fire.

This points us to Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the faithful Son who refused every idol. He would not bow to Satan in the wilderness. He would not save Himself by abandoning His Father's will.

He went to the cross. He entered judgment for His people. He was not delivered from suffering before the cross, but through death by resurrection.

That is our ultimate hope.

Not that every furnace disappears before we feel the heat.

Not that every prayer is answered according to our first desire.

But that in Christ, we are never abandoned by God.

Application

Pray boldly.

Do not bow to the idol of despair.

Do not bow to the idol of control.

Do not bow to the lie that God's goodness depends on the answer you can see.

If you are still waiting for rescue, keep taking the next faithful step.

If God has given you peace to release the outcome into His hands, receive that too.

Faith is not fatalism. Faith is not presumption.

Faith says, "My God is able."

And faith says, "Even if His answer is not what I hoped, I will trust Him still."

Because Jesus stands with His people in the fire.

Discussion Guide Questions

1. What stood out to you from the opening reference to *The Martian*?
2. Why is hope important when rescue is still out of sight?
3. What kinds of pressure can function like an idol's demand for allegiance?
4. Why is it important to say, "The furnace is real, but the idol is not God"?
5. What is the difference between honest surrender and unbelieving resignation?
6. What is the difference between bold prayer and presumption?
7. Why does Daniel 3:18 matter so much for Christian faith?
8. How does Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane help us understand "even if" faith?
9. Why is the fourth figure in the furnace such a powerful picture of God's presence?
10. How does this story point us to Christ?
11. Where do you need to keep praying boldly?

12. Where might God be calling you to trust Him with open hands?