

Standing When Things Get Heated

Text: Daniel 3:1-18

Introduction:

1. This chapter records the courageous, uncompromising stand of Daniel's three friends. In chapter 1 they supported Daniel in his stand against compromise. Now they must stand for themselves without Daniel's leadership.
2. These men serve as a tremendous example of what it means to stand for God in a world that is hostile to our faith.
3. Richard Wurmbrand – *“A man really believes not what he recites in his creed, but only the things he is willing to die for.”*
4. Observe four lessons about their godly stand:

I. The Catalyst for their Stand (Vs. 1-7)

A. The Construction of the Idol (Vs. 1)

1. The materials – ‘gold’
2. The dimensions – 60x6 cubits (approx... 94x9ft OR 28x2.7mtrs)
This would be around 8 times the height of our church ceiling!
3. The location – plain of Dura. Exact location unknown but somewhere near the city of Babylon (“province of Babylon”). Area selected as it was ideal for both visibility and assembly.
4. The purpose – a two-fold purpose can be discerned
 - a. The exaltation of Nebuchadnezzar – it is likely the idea was based on the Revelation of the previous chapter where Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom is depicted as the head of gold. The statue may well have been a sculpture of himself. The deification of man is the natural progression of idolatry (See Rom. 1:23). Recent and present dictators follow the same pattern.
 - b. The unification of world religion – Nebuchadnezzar is a picture of the antichrist who will demand worship in the tribulation period. Despots down through the centuries have sought to control the masses under their rule by taking control of religion (e.g. communism)

B. The Call to the Idol (Vs. 2-3)

1. The subjects of the invitation – the rulers
2. The scope of the invitation – the whole empire. This would involve some organization and effort.

C. The Coercion to the Idol (Vs. 4-6)

1. ‘commanded’ (Vs. 4) = this is compulsory worship; the state seeking to rule the consciences of the people. The edict was clear, “bow or burn” (Strauss)

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2. True religious liberty does not come out of paganism, atheism or even state churches. It comes when the Gospel truths of God's Word deeply permeate a culture and society. The further our nation pursues the religion of atheism, we can expect more and more attempts to dictate what people can believe and even think. Definite attempts are being made to pass legislation today to coerce believers to bow the knee to the idols of perversion and wickedness.
3. "all kinds of music" (Vs. 5) = music used to invoke religious feelings and also signal when to begin worshipping the idol. This would not have been godly music but the type of heathen music often associated with idolatrous worship.
4. "whosoever falleth not down...fiery furnace" (Vs. 6) = the command is reinforced with the threat of a terrifying death if disobeyed.

D. The Compliance to the Idol (Vs. 7)

1. The people, almost without exception, complied with the command and bowed the knee to the idol.
2. It would not be a stretch of the imagination to suggest that there were very likely other Jews (God's people) amongst that great congregation who chose to go along with the crowd rather than face the consequences of standing (remember chapter 1 where most of the Jews chose to defile themselves with the king's meat). It is no different today! Standing against the giant idols of Satan in our day usually means standing alone or with the minority. But better stand alone and have the Lord with you than compromise with the crowd and be without Him!

II. The Criticism of their Stand (Vs. 8-12)

A. Their Approach (Vs. 8-11)

1. The word 'accuse' comes from the Hebrew word "to bite or chew". This was a bitter, malicious attack. Violent opposition can be expected when we stand against idolatry and compromise.
2. These men obviously were watching the Jewish believers. If you are the only three standing out of thousands, you are going to be conspicuous and attract some opposition.
3. "thou, O king, hast made a decree" = there are lots of supporters for laws if the laws condone evil

B. Their Accusation (Vs. 12)

They leveled a triple accusation at the three men.

1. They accused them of disloyalty – "not regarded thee"
 - a. They seek to make their stand a personal attack on the king. In reality, these men were his most loyal and trustworthy subjects! We know from the previous chapter that the king didn't trust his

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own wise men! Daniel and his three friends had proven themselves men of true integrity.

- b. Standing for the Lord will invariably cause offense on a personal level even though in reality you are simply seeking to be true to your conscience before the Lord. It really comes down to a choice as to whom we are more willing to offend; man, or God.
 - c. Christ demands that as His disciples that we be loyal to Him above all else, even if that cuts across the closest and dearest of human ties (Luke 14:26)
2. They accused them of defiance – “they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image”
 - a. This accusation was true! These men would not serve the idols of Babylon or break the first and second commandment. Service and worship are linked!
 - b. They attempt to make it personal again – “which thou hast set up”. They are appealing to the king’s pride.

III. The Confrontation of their Stand (Vs. 13-15)

A. The King’s Offense (Vs. 13-14)

1. “rage and fury” = Nebuchadnezzar was filled with diabolical rage at Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego. The world hates it when we refuse to be conformed to its evil ways.
2. “they brought” = appears the accusers were the ones who brought the men to the king
3. This would be an awesome test to their stand to be summoned into the presence of the most powerful monarch on earth in the presence of the most powerful men of the empire (the ruling class).

B. The King’s Offer (Vs. 15)

1. This was probably the greatest test to their convictions. The king offers them the option of compromise. He will give them a second chance to yield to his diabolical decree. The world doesn’t mind extending superficial mercy, so long as you bow the knee of compromise. In fact, the world seems to get a special delight in seeing a godly Christian lower the flag of separation.
2. The promise of personal peace and preservation in exchange for compromising on the truth is a very powerful temptation. Self is ever ready to side step the cross and take the easy road out in such situations.
3. What sort of advice would these men have received from 21st century, rock and roll Christianity? They would probably advise them to just sway with the sackbut and dance to the dulcimer and join in the ecumenical gathering in a spirit of love. Anything but separation!

IV. The Courage of their Stand (Vs. 16-18)

Look at their bold reply!

A. It was Forthright (Vs. 16)

1. “not careful” = there was no hesitation in their reply. While given in a respectful tone, they would not pull any punches on “this matter”. Interestingly, the word ‘careful’ is translated “have need of” in Ezra 6:9. It is almost like they are saying “there’s no need for a discussion on this.”
2. There would be no room for negotiations on their godly convictions. We live in a day where everything has to be “discussed”. If such discussions are for the purpose of negotiating compromise, they should not be entertained! We live in a day where we tend to be so reluctant to express anything in an absolute manner but to be Scriptural, we must. This doesn’t mean being brash or obnoxious. These men didn’t rail on the king. They simply made it clear where they stood.
3. Illustration: Athanasius was one of the early church fathers. We are indebted to him for the purity of the doctrine of the deity of Jesus Christ. He would not relinquish his stand against a popular heresy of the day. Someone came to him and said, “*Athanasius don't you know that the Emperor is against you, the bishops are against you, the church is against you, the whole world is against you.*” Athanasius replied, “*Then Athanasius is against the whole world.*”

B. It was Faith filled (Vs. 17-18a)

The faith of these men was a mature faith that included two elements:

1. They believed in the Ability of God – “our God is able” There was no question in their minds that God had the power to deliver them to the point that there was even assurance that they would be delivered – “and he will deliver us” Even death for a Christian is a form of deliverance!
2. They believed in the Sovereignty of God – “but if not” The ‘if’ has nothing to do with God’s power but rather His will. They were in no doubt that God could deliver them but they didn’t know if he would deliver them. Godly faith involves submission to God’s Sovereign will for our lives whether that has a favorable or seemingly unfavorable outcome in this life on earth. These men didn’t put conditions on their allegiance to their God.

C. It was Fixed (Vs. 18b)

1. These men were unmovable, uncompromising and unequivocal in their reply. Under no circumstances would they bow the knee to Nebuchadnezzar’s pagan idol. Nebuchadnezzar gave them two

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options but for these men there was only one option; honor God and face the fire!

2. Illustration: Not too long ago, a young Korean Christian was taken by the communists. Determining to make him a public example, the soldiers commanded the entire village to appear in the town square. A communist soldier led the young Christian to the centre of the town; put a pistol to his head and shouted, **“Denounce Jesus Christ and embrace Communism, or die.”** The young man looked around at the crowd and then raised his head toward heaven and shouted, *“I believe in Jesus Christ! I believe . . .”* Crack! He was dead.

Conclusion: Will you stand for your Saviour no matter the cost? Will you be loyal to Him even if it means facing persecution, trial and distress?