

The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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Stand or Compromise: What Will You Do? (Part 2)

Daniel 3:16-18

Last month I introduced our subject of standing or compromising. I felt the need to spend much time just introducing the subject. As with most issues in the spiritual realm, there are only two choices—to do what is right or to do what is wrong. Contrary to modern philosophy and religion, there is not a middle ground. There is either the right thing to do—stand up for what is right; or there is the wrong thing to do—follow the path of compromise. Now most people want another way—the easy route. To the flesh the easy route does not offend people. But as I tried to state last month, the easy route is the path of compromise. The easy route would have been to bow before the image, but the three Hebrew men did not take the easy route of compromise. They took the more difficult path of standing up for what is right. John the Baptist did not take the easy route of saying nothing about Herod's sin. He took the more difficult route of standing up and boldly declaring that Herod's marriage to Herodias was sin. A host of examples could be given from Scripture such as Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and many others from the Old Testament along with Peter, Stephen, Paul, and many others from the New Testament. To go outside the Bible we could write about William Tyndale, Miles Coverdale, John Bunyan, George Whitefield, John Wesley, Charles Spurgeon, and others who chose the right path of standing up for truth and rejected the easy path of compromise. More modern examples of men like Bob Jones Sr., Frank Norris, Monroe Parker, Harold Sightler, Oliver Greene, and others would show that the right thing is to stand up for truth and reject all forms of compromise. I mention all of this because I want to make it absolutely clear—there are two choices, but there is ONLY one right choice. The flesh says take the easy way, but that is the wrong way. We must determine to stand up for the Bible and right and not

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compromise with what is wrong.

Now let me narrow down our thoughts to the book of Daniel. Daniel easily divides into two parts: one practical; the other prophetic. The first half is what I call a **Book of Practicality**. All of the chapters in this first half, except for chapter 2, contain events from the life of Daniel and his friends. They are real events that are easy for us to understand. They are very practical to use which is why I use that term. In chapter 1, we have the Determined Stand. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, refuse to partake of the king's meat and wine. They are determined to do right even if it costs them their life. In chapter 3, we have the occasion of the Fiery Furnace which we will focus on in this message. Chapter 4 deals with Nebuchadnezzar's Pride and Rebuke. In this chapter Nebuchadnezzar seems to finally and fully recognize God as the true God. This is followed by chapter 5 which describes Belshazzar's Sin and Judgment. This is the chapter where Belshazzar brings out the temple vessels and desecrates them by using them in his party. God declares judgment upon Belshazzar and Babylon by writing out that judgment with His own fingers. Only Daniel is able to interpret the message that Babylon will fall and Belshazzar will be killed that very night. The first half of Daniel closes out with chapter 6 describing Daniel and the Den of Lions. In this chapter the other men want to eliminate Daniel by persuading King Darius to compel all the people to pray only to Darius for thirty days. They do so because they can find nothing else which they can accuse Daniel of doing that would cause him to be removed from his position. Daniel faithfully prays to God and is cast into the den of lions, but God miraculously spares his life.

The other half of Daniel is what I call **The Book of Prophecy**. Some of these prophecies have been fulfilled and others are still awaiting fulfillment. The first chapter of prophecy goes back to chapter 2 and the vision of the Image that Nebuchadnezzar sees and Daniel explains to be four world empires of Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Daniel sees a vision of Beasts in chapter 7 which

are explained as these same empires that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his image. Daniel has another vision of two animals, a Ram and Goat, in chapter 8. The ram is explained to be Media-Persia and the goat is identified as Greece. The best summation of chapter 9 is the vision of Seventy Weeks. These are weeks of years totaling 490 years. These years relate to Daniel's people—the Jews. These weeks pinpoint the exact time that the Messiah would come, but leave one week unfulfilled. That week will be the seven years of Tribulation that occur on this earth after the church is raptured. Chapter 10 has the Place of Israel in the years to come, followed by chapter 11's Arrangement of Nations. The book of Daniel concludes in chapter 12 with the promise of Resurrection.

Now having introduced our subject and the book of Daniel, let us get into the message. The first thought that we will consider is **The Provocation to Compromise**. As we study this chapter and some earlier verses in Daniel, we can see some thoughts that could have provoked these Hebrew men to give in to the temptation to compromise. These same provocations are in our lives today. Obviously, the exact situations will be different, but the reality of what they faced has not changed. Because they refused to give in, we can determine to stand up and not compromise in our situation as well. Do not give in to the lie that they are Bible characters, and so they are not really an example for us to follow. I Corinthians 10:11 sums up all of the Old Testament by stating *“all these things happened unto them for ensamples.”* These are recorded for the express purpose of providing encouragement to do right even under seemingly impossible circumstances. There are plenty of examples in Scripture of those who did wrong, but this chapter records a great example of ones who did right.

The first provocation to compromise encountered by Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah is The Crowd. Daniel 3:7 says, *“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.” Notice that the phrase *“all the people”* is found two times in this verse. It would have been very easy, humanly speaking, to do what everyone else was doing. Everyone fell down to worship the image, so to be like everyone else, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego could have fallen down before this image that had been set up in the plain of Dura. After all, who wants to be the only one **not** doing what everyone else was doing? Most people want to fit in with the crowd. On this day it would have been very easy to fit in with the crowd. They were all bowing. The thought could have been, *“We may as well join in with them.”*

Think for a moment about how many could have been in this crowd. Whether the number was small or large does not matter much because either way the provocation would have been strong to do what everyone else was doing. We have no way of knowing for sure how many were there, but we can venture a guess based upon those ordered to be there and the size of the kingdom of Babylon. Verse 2 lists the leaders as *“the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces.”* There are seven distinct groups listed and then what appears to be a summation of other groups is described as *“all the rulers of the provinces.”* If there were only two of each kind called to Dura, there would have been 18 people there, but obviously the number would have been much greater. I mention the small number just to make us realize that, at least to the flesh, there is never an easy time to make a stand for God. If the crowd was small, the provocation could have been along the lines of this—*“It's just a few of us. To stand up now would be a waste of effort. No one is going to see us do this. Let's wait till we have a bigger chance to stand up for something.”* That may seem like a silly statement to make, but in reality that is often how we are tempted. We are faced with the issue that we are in a small crowd, so no one will really care. We will do right when more people will notice. But the reality is that we may never be in a big crowd where we can really do something “big.” The other reality is that if we are not ready to stand up in the “small”

times, we will never stand up in the “big” times.

But I think the crowd was much larger than 18 people. I think this crowd included most of the rulers in Babylon. I think some were allowed to stay in their position and locality to keep the government going. That is why I think Daniel was not there. He was off in some area of the kingdom doing government business, perhaps filling in where one of these rulers had left. I know he was not there because he would not have bowed. So most of the leaders of Babylon were in the plain of Dura. The numbers were large—at least several hundred with one estimate being as many as 2,000 people. With numbers like that, the provocation could have come into the minds of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to bow down with everyone else. Think about being in that large crowd. Put yourself in that situation with 2,000 people. A thought like this may come, “No one will even notice us. Look at this crowd. We can just fall down before this image and not even mean it. No one will pay attention. There are too many people.” Can you see how the provocation to compromise can be so easy to fall prey to? If the numbers are small, the thought could be that no one will notice. One could think, “I am in a small town. Let’s just fit in.” In a big city, the thought could be the same, “No one will notice. Let’s just fit in.” How can the same thought be in both places? We will have to continue with that next month.