

The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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Volume 12, Issue 12

May 2016

Stand or Compromise: What Will You Do? (Part 5)

Daniel 3:16-18

Last month we gave a few thoughts about The Consequence that was made known to Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and the entire crowd if they did not bow. There may have been some that would not have bowed if the consequence would not have been so severe. Some may have refused to bow if the punishment would only have been a beating. Some may not have bowed if there would have been a fine of some kind. However, if any were wavering about their decision, when told at the very beginning that they would be cast into a fiery furnace, they made the decision to bow. In this great crowd of perhaps 2,000 people, only three men were willing to do what was right regardless of the cost. They knew what the penalty would be, but they were determined to do right even if they died doing so. What courage! What determination! What devotion to God! These men loved God more than anything else, even life itself. Can that be said of us? Are we truly willing to do whatever it costs to serve God faithfully and wholeheartedly? That is a question we must be ready and willing to answer.

Think for a moment about what these men were willing to give up. They had a good position in the government. At the end of chapter 2, it is said that they were set over the affairs of the province of Babylon. Exactly what that may have involved, I will not go into right now, but it would not take much imagination to say that it was a good position to have. Some have compromised their stand on Scripture to keep less important positions, but these men were not willing to do anything against Scripture, even to keep this position in government.

Scripture does not tell us what these men were thinking, but

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consider what may have gone through their minds. If they were like most of us, they would have considered what they would lose if they did not bow. They might have thought, "We will lose any influence we may have, if we are dead and not here to be around these people." That is a thought many people have. It sounds reasonable to the human mind and flesh to say such a thing. But the one that compromises has no influence at all! The flesh says, "At least, I will be here." But in reality, one who compromises has destroyed all hope of being any kind of influence on anyone. Think about what would have happened if Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would have bowed to the image. They would have faced comments like this: "I thought you said that your God Jehovah was the only true God. If He is the only true God, why did you bow before a false one?" Their entire testimony that took years to establish would have been destroyed by one act of disobedience. Others might have responded by saying, "You are no different than the rest of us. You are as weak as we are. But we do not care about a particular god. You said you only worship Jehovah, but you bowed to the false god and showed that you are as weak and gutless as the rest of us." On and on comments could be made concerning what the people might have said if Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would have bowed to the image. But thanks be to God, they did not bow. Others might have disagreed with them and even ridiculed them in the past, but they could not dispute their courage. They could not accuse them of hypocrisy. They stated what they believed, and then showed what they believed in how they lived their life. May the same be said of us.

Now let us take just a few moments and apply this provocation to compromise to our own life. Right now, in the United States, we will not be put to death for our belief and practice of Scripture. As many have said all of my life, we may reach that point at some time if things keep going the way they are going right now. But at this moment, the government is not sanctioning the putting to death of Christians. But there are other ways that one can compromise because of the consequences. Sometimes pastors refuse to take a

stand on a Biblical issue because it may result in his being dismissed from the church that he is pastoring. Often, we think of a situation like this in a denominational church when a man has been confronted with the true teaching of Scripture. If he teaches according to the Scripture, the denomination may oppose him, and he may back down, so he can keep the church. But this may happen in an Independent Baptist church. Some issue may come up that has been avoided for a long time. People may not even realize that what they are doing is wrong, but when told that their action is wrong, they may not want to change. The pastor must decide if he will let the people continue doing wrong and say nothing, or if he will preach the truth and let happen what may, even if it means losing the church.

Sadly, years ago when the decision was made between those who would separate from the liberal denominations and those who would stay in them, many of those that stayed in the liberal denominations did so for financial reasons. They did not know how they could afford to leave the denomination. They knew that liberalism was being taught in the seminaries, and they knew, according to the Scriptures, that it was wrong to support it with their offerings. But they did not have enough faith that God would take care of them. They worried that they would not have a large enough salary, or that they would have to give up some of the comforts that they had enjoyed. Whatever the reason may have been, they were not willing to suffer the consequences for doing right.

Even now, some preachers may not be willing to preach all of the Bible. They are not willing to stand against sin by preaching what the Bible says. They reason that they may lose some members if they preach against certain sins. They continue by saying that if they lose members, then the tithes and offerings will decrease, and the church will suffer. But may I remind you that the church is already suffering by the toleration and the refusal to take a stand against sin. We have enough of people being like the world in our churches now. We need preachers who will preach what is right regardless of the consequences. If people will not get right and they leave the church,

then so be it. It is better to have a smaller church with people who are right with God, than to have a bigger church with a crowd that does not want to please God. We need men who will be like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—men who will stand up for what is right no matter what it might cost them. May God help us to stand up for the truth.

Before we move on, may I say a few more things about doing right regardless of the consequences. I have just hit on some general thoughts. I could deal with specific issues, but there would be many of them, and I do not want to get bogged down right here. But let me say that our concern must be with doing right in the sight of God, not what will happen to us if we do right. A pastor must determine to do right even if people leave the church, and he must do right even if the church votes him out. An evangelist must determine to do right even if some get mad at him because of his preaching and even if it means he will not be invited back to the church for another meeting. A husband and wife must determine to do right even if their family gets mad at them. An employee must determine to do right even if it costs him his job. A school must determine to have high standards even if the number of students diminishes. A mission board must determine to do right even if missionaries want to lower the standards. As Bob Jones Sr. used to say, “Do right; even if the stars fall, do right!” But one may say, “It might cost me something.” Good! That is all right. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were told that they would be put to death if they did not bow. They stood up. Even when brought before the king in verses 14 and 15 and given a second chance, they refused to bow. The consequences that may happen do not determine whether the right thing should be done. What is right according to Scripture must always be done regardless of the consequences.

A few days ago, I was reading again the background of the writing of “It is Well with my Soul.” Horatio Spafford’s four daughters all drowned after their ship was hit by another ship. Upon hearing the awful news, Spafford said to a friend, “I am glad to trust Christ when it costs me something.” May we be willing to suffer for

Christ if need be when we stand up for what is right. He suffered all for us. Can any consequence for doing right be too much to give for Him? I do not think so.

Not only do we notice The Provocation to Compromise, but in verses 16-18, we see **The Proving of Character**. I have mentioned this portion a couple of times throughout the message, but we will focus on it for a little bit right now. These are the verses that I read at the beginning of the message. After being told by "*certain Chaldeans*" that three Hebrews did not bow, Nebuchadnezzar orders them to appear before him. Verse 13 uses the words "*rage and fury*" to describe Nebuchadnezzar. Verse 14 records this question, "*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?*" It almost seems that Nebuchadnezzar is surprised that anyone would disobey him. He is not used to someone defying his orders. He has a "quick fuse" as seen in verse 13, but he also seems to calm down quickly. He was infuriated that someone would defy his order, but either because of who they are or because he is very emotional, he gives them a second chance. We will pick up from this point next month.