

Series: For such a time as this

“Fourth Man in the Fire”

Daniel 3:1-30

Not everybody is prepared to be bold or courageous for their faith, but there's an account in the Bible of three young men who took a stand for God. It challenges us who read it to ask the question, *“Do I really believe this?”* We have it pretty easy here in America if we think about it - but *real persecution* is happening all around the world right now. It is life-threatening - people are losing their lives for Jesus, particularly in Muslim-dominated nations. They're willing to lay their lives down - to go to prison and be killed for their faith.

We can ask ourselves, *“Do we really believe it - that song we sing - the bumper sticker on our car - the t-shirt in our closet?”* And - do we believe it to the point that we'd be willing to lay our lives down for it? Many of us have a false sense of security in our world, where we think, *“Yeah! I live in America - the United States of AMERICA! We're never gonna see that kind of persecution on our shores. We'll never see another nine-eleven!”*

But then, our borders have been wide open, and we're seeing an influx of potential sleeper cells all around us - and we have to ask ourselves from a new and higher level than from ten or fifteen years ago, *“Do I really believe that?”* In the face of real persecution - of losing our job and livelihood - our home or other things - or *people* - would we still be willing to stand up and say, *“I believe in the life of Jesus? - that he conquered death - that he was resurrected? Do I really believe?”* In the face of death, three young men were called upon to take a stand for what they believed...

Daniel 3:1-7 NIV

“King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, sixty cubits high and six cubits wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. He then summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up. So the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before it.”

“Then the herald loudly proclaimed, ‘Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do: As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.’ Therefore, as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp and all kinds of music, all the nations and peoples of every language fell down and worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.”

There are multiple “images of gold” that have been set up even now, and we’ve been commanded to fall down and worship those *idols* that are everywhere. We can’t get around them. Our *government* has become an idol, and we’re being commanded to worship and serve it. Human nature doesn’t change even if times and seasons do.

Daniel 3:8-17 NIV

“At this time some astrologers came forward and denounced the Jews. They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, ‘May the king live forever! Your Majesty has issued a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music must fall down and worship the image of gold, and that whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into a blazing furnace. But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon - Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego - who pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up.’

“Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, ‘Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?’

“Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, ‘King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand.’ ”

If we are ever threatened, as followers of Jesus - to renounce our faith - at that moment we're in a win-win proposition. If we take our stand and lose our life for that, in the next nano-second, we're before the King, with no pain - no shame only love and grace - only his fullness and inexpressible joy - we're in his presence. And - if they back off, we win because we get to breathe another breath and keep doing life. But, make no bones about it, people today are giving their lives for Jesus - for their belief and for the Kingdom.

Daniel 3:18-26 NIV

“ ‘But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.’ Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. The king’s command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

“Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, ‘Weren’t there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?’ They replied, ‘Certainly, Your Majesty.’ He said, ‘Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.’ Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, ‘Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!’ So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire...”

Another attitude shift

Daniel 3:27-30 NIV

“...and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them. Then Nebuchadnezzar said, ‘Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king’s command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way.’ Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon.”

They were in a win-win prospect: *“but even if he does not...”* What would we say if someone approached us and threatened us with physical harm to renounce Jesus? Would we be willing to go into the fire? - to take a stand no matter what the consequences may be for us and our family? *“But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”* - Joshua 24:15. We have to understand that if we are to follow Jesus, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, *“Jesus bids a man come and die”*.

We’ve had it so *easy* here in America in terms of our faith. We’ve rarely had to face anything like this. That could be for one of two reasons: either there’s just not that level of persecution around us, or, we’re not *saying* what *needs* to be said - we’re not showing up at the school board meetings or the city council meetings. God has given every one of us a sphere of influence, and *in* that is a place where you’re to step up and shout it from the rooftops, *“Jesus Christ is my Savior! He’s the Lord of my life. He’s the Center of everything. He’s not an addendum or a concordance - or even an intro. He’s not only the Alpha and the Omega - the beginning and the end - he’s everything in between!”*

We have to stand up, and we have to take a stand for Him - for *his* honor and for *his* glory - in our given sphere of influence. The only reason we have been given by God a sphere of influence - a realm - a dominion - is so that we can bring the kingdom of heaven into the realm of this earth. *That* is our call - *that* is our responsibility. What is our realm - our sphere of influence? It’s wherever we live, work, and play. We may or may not have to take a stand at this level, but, the question is, *“Would I, if I had to, and how will I take a stand now - in this place?”*

Kingdom of God... COME! Will of God... BE DONE!

Right *here*. Right now - on *earth as it is in Heaven*. *That’s* the call we must follow today - and to be *bold*! We might think, *“I’d like to, but I’m not confident.”* Sometimes the reason we’re not confident is because of *sin*. So many of us as Christians are living with hidden sin in our life - we have secrets - things we’ve kept in a room that we’ve reserved only for ourselves. We’ve given God the keys to all of the other rooms, but we’ve kept the master key for ourselves - just in case we want to get back into a room that we can control - a besetting, pet sin.

Then the reason we don't feel *confident* to share our faith is that we don't feel worthy to share it because of those hidden things. It's important that we address this, because what God is calling on us to do is stand up and make a difference in our spheres of influence, but if we're not confident because we've got a secret - something hidden away that the enemy will continue to leverage against our confidence and boldness - the moment we start to step up - to read our Bible and pray again - to step into higher realms of living in authority in our faith - the enemy will bring these accusations against us and the dark closet we've hidden away.

Then we shrink back and say, "*Oh, man, yeah - he's right - I can't do that.*" The question then is, would we be willing to lay down anything and everything in our life that is keeping us from him? - that is keeping us from a clear conscience - from being free from living a life that is joyful and abundant? We're not called to live a secret life - or to be undercover as believers. Would we be willing to lay it all down for him? - willing to give up control and give God the master key - not just the *little* keys to the rooms - but the key - and say, "*I'm giving this to You because I need You to be Lord over every part of my life.*" If he's not Lord over all ...he's not Lord at all.

Prayer

Father, we honor You. We love You. For every person here that needs prayer today, we're here to stand - to take some shots on their behalf - to hold them up in the midst of the battle. Now, as we go from here we go commissioned - to go out into this world and make a difference, and to be loud and proud for our faith - and we stand up, and, like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, we will take a stand for what we believe. Lord, give us opportunities to take a stand in our spheres of influence. In Jesus' name. Amen