

Young People Take A Stand

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[0:00] In Daniel chapter 1 it talks about the three Hebrew children Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. And it says how they were brought to the service of the king.

And it describes them as children or young people in whom was no blemish but well favoured. They were skilful in all wisdom and cunning in knowledge and understanding science and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace.

And they were brought into the king's service into his school to learn about the tongue of the Chaldeans. So they were schooled by the king and entered into his service.

So they were young men from the royal family. So they were of the king's seed and of the princes.

So they were kind of of the Israel royal family. They were born of royal blood.

And we see how God's interested in young people. So young adults, young people such as you guys here tonight. So I wanted to talk about three things that marks these young people in Daniel's account.

[1:05] So the first one is that they are young people who were willing to stand out. To stand out. And it's a question for all of us. Are we going to be willing to stand out or blend in?

So we see one of the things that happened was that they stood out from the crowd. So physically they were good looking, healthy. They were intelligent mentally.

They were quick to learn. And they were socially fit to serve as well. And so God's interested in the whole you. You know, physically, mentally, socially, in all of those ways. And of course, spiritually.

And so we know that for us as God's children, those that have trusted the Lord, that God wants to use you in his service. And it's good for us to think about our time, our life, our talents.

How can we be used of God? And so King Nebuchadnezzar chose these ones to train in and enter into his personal service. So, and he arranged for them a daily diet of special food and wine from his table.

[2:04] So it was the best in the nation. It was the royal table, but they refused it because we could reckon that it was because it was food dedicated to idols. And of course, we know that beer can make people drunk and kills brain cells.

So it's not a good idea, even logically, really. But so, but they chose to make a stand about the things that they partook of and to really to stand out from the crowd.

And it's the same for you and me today as God's people. So many people want to take on the language, the look, the lifestyle, and the Lord of this world. But we're called to serve a different God, aren't we?

We're called to God's service. And so these young people, they weren't wanting to follow the crowd, even though they lived in a palace and there's all that temptation around them and all of the kind of sinful pleasures and all the things that might go along with lots of money or fame or fortune or even immorality that could have been around.

So they were willing, the first point really, to stand out. And one of the things that it said about them was that they made a decision. It says that they purposed in their heart not to defile themselves.

[3:13] So they made that decision about what they were going to get involved with, that they weren't going to go along with that which the world was going on with. And we can be like that too. You know, there's a lot of talk about the world environment.

But what about our heart environment? Are we keeping our heart clean? Are we keeping our thoughts clean? And the Bible says, how can a young person keep themselves clean?

How can a young man keep themselves clean? By living according to God's word, it says in Psalm 119 verse 9. So they made a decision, it was a deliberate choice. And we can all make that decision for Christ, to trust Christ, and then to walk with him, to know his will and to do it.

And it says that as a result of what they chose not to eat, it says that they were better and healthier than everyone else that was around. And it says that God gave them skill in all knowledge and understanding.

So God blessed them in practical ways because of their stand that they made of conscience. They didn't take the path of compromise. They refused to join in such things as the worldly set were doing.

[4:18] And so this speaks to us of separation and how we should likewise think about what culture and what ways we're going to follow, whether it's the world and all its ways or whether we really put the Lord first about what we choose to do.

So number one is stand out. The second thing about these young people is that they chose to stand tall. They chose to stand tall. We can stand tall or we can bow down. So what happened next was there was a big image that the king constructed.

It was made of gold and it was 90 feet by 9 feet. So this massive structure, this massive statue, and it was really an idol. And he called the whole nation to come and to bow down.

When he struck up his music that everyone was going to bow down, they were made to bow down of all people, nations and races and languages. And if you didn't join in, you were going to be thrown into the middle of a fiery furnace.

And so the question is when the heat is really on, are you going to tow the line or are you going to cross the line and stand for God? Stand tall. And so all the important people were there.

[5:26] And as soon as you heard the band strike up the note, you're all commanded to fall down and worship the image. Of course, we know the Bible says not to worship any graven image, not to bow down to statues and images, because we only bow down to the living God.

And so they were facing all this pressure. Are they going to fit in or, you know, just go along with the peer pressure or are we going to dare to be different? And it's the same choice for us today, isn't it? It's been said if you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything.

And so what happened was everybody else bowed down when the music struck up and the king went really crazy in chapter three. When he heard about it, he went absolutely crazy.

And he said that he was going to punish them. They told him that they wouldn't serve his gods or worship the idol. You know, they said it respectfully, but they said it nevertheless that they were going to stand tall and they weren't going to bow down to their idol.

And then he said, what God is able to rescue from my hand. And they said, well, we've made our mind up. This is what we're going to do. We're going to trust God. And so they chose to stand tall, not to bow down.

[6:33] The other thing that happened next, we see that the people who are going to stand tall, not to bow down. Next we see that because they chose to stand tall and not bow down, the king followed through on his order that they were to be thrown into the midst of the burning, fiery furnace.

And so they faced up to the king and they chose to stand out, to stand tall and to stand firm. They could have backed down. The king could have talked them out of it, the threat of the burning, fiery furnace, but they chose to stand firm.

And it's the same for you and me when we face persecution, when we face up to those who might oppose us because we're believers. We might face trials and opposition and pressure from the world.

And so this king flew into a rage. You can imagine it was pretty confronting. His face was distorted with anger, it says. And he ordered that the furnace was heated seven times hotter than usual.

And then he got the biggest, strongest, toughest man from his army, these mean dudes. And they grabbed the three Hebrew children. They tied them up and they threw them into the midst of the fire.

[7:41] So it was so hot that it killed the men that threw these three into the furnace. And then they fell into the burning, fiery furnace, the blazing furnace. But they still believed.

They dared to believe. They trusted God. And it's the same for you and me when I've acts against the wall. I've faced situations like that. And what happened was that the Lord accompanied them in the fire.

So the king jumped up in a hurry when he saw that they were still alive. And he was amazed. He saw that it was the power of God. And he says, as he looked into the fire, it says that he saw four men loose, walking around in the midst of the fire and that they were set free and unhurt.

And he says the fourth looks like the son of God. So what happened was that effectively the Lord Jesus was with them. God was with them in the fire. So it wasn't just three in the fire. It was the fourth man was God, the son of God, the Lord Jesus appearing.

In effect, prior to his physical coming at Bethlehem, that he actually appeared with them there. The son of God was there as the fourth one, the fourth man in the fire.

[8:51] And it's the same for you and me that whatever we're going through, that Jesus is with us right in the midst, even if it's in a really situation like that, a really tough situation that he's right there with us.

And so when King Nebuchadnezzar saw what was happening, he says, come out, come here, you servants of the Most High God. And it's the same for you and me that people are going to recognize who you are.

You're a servant of the Most High God because God's with you. And it says that the royal advisors crowded around them. And it says that they noticed that there was no effect of the fire.

Their bodies were not harmed. Their hair wasn't singed. They didn't even smell of the fire. There wasn't even the smell of the fire on them. And so it's the same for you and me as young adults.

You know, you're the future of the church. Really, you are the church, already the church. And, you know, God's got his hand on each one of you about your future. You've got a whole lot of years ahead of you.

[9:51] And people are going to recognize who you are, that you're servants of the Most High God. As you take a stand, as you stand up, as you make a decision, like these three Hebrew children did, we can think of the king.

In a way, King Nebuchadnezzar is a bit like Elvis Presley. They call him the king. And his life was full of pleasure and fame and riches. His screaming devoted fans would do anything for him.

But the reality is that Elvis Presley choked to death on his own vomit. He lived a life of emptiness and loneliness and helplessness. Because really, he didn't follow the Lord in his life.

And, you know, he was really living a miserable life because it was really empty of God. And so the devil's working to destroy this generation. And he wants us to miss out on those real answers.

But the truth is that the Lord Jesus came from the far reaches of space to save this planet. He's the saviour. He's our saviour as we trust him. He's the source of our life.

[10:55] Now is the time to serve God, to follow God, to be strong. We should be servants of the Most High God. Even in our younger years, all the better in your younger years, because you can start off right.

You can start that walking with God young and early in life is the greatest decision that you can make. So really to recap, you can stand out, not blend in. They showed their convictions by even the practical things that they did.

They were willing to stand out, not blend in. They were willing to stand tall, not bow down. When everybody else was bowing down to the idol, they said, we're going to stand tall. We're going to stand for God, even though everybody else is doing it.

You know, that's the thing that people say, or everybody else is doing it. So that doesn't make it right, does it? Just because everybody else is doing something, we know that the Bible says is wrong.

We're going to stand tall. We're not going to bow down. We're not going to go along with the crowd, but we're going to stand for Jesus. And we're going to stand firm too. Even when the heat is on, we might face, well, in their case that was facing really a death sentence, that they were willing to stand firm and not to back down, to not back down.

[12:05] So even when you face testing and you might face peer pressure or even family pressure to conform, to, you know, just tone it down with your Christian walk, that you can stand firm and not back down.

To be willing to take the heat, you know, and be a firm Christian. Lord, we thank you for everyone that's here tonight, these young adults and those that might watch this later, Lord, that we can all be encouraged in our convictions to stand up for you, to firstly put our faith in you, to trust you as our Lord and Saviour, and to make that conviction a walk of life.

Our lifestyle is such that we'll stand for you in every situation that we face. And give each one here courage, Lord. Give each of us the courage of our convictions, Lord, that our faith is in you, our trust is in you.

And to know that you're with us, even if it be to go into the fire, as it were, that you're going to be standing with us and that you never leave us nor forsake us. And Lord, help us to be true to our faith and to be bold such that we'll even confess our faith, even when it's going to be a testing thing to do.

Lord, we praise you for these things in Jesus' name. Amen.