

When the Heat's Turned On

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It is designed to make All human human human It's own mind and its own

[14 : 59] People of people of God Jesus knew it.

The man of Daniel He undertakes to be with you and the So, you see,

And a man, and reality and truth, and reality and truth and many people, and reality will triumph and■, anose dollars, and■■■■, andif and andesus.

stand in line. We must realise that at some time in our life, their stand must be our stand and their words our words. For some of us, it will be in the office, in the workplace, or in calls to sacrifice our theology or our principle in the churches that we live in and minister in. Here the cost might be reputation, friendships, promotion, status, jobs, livelihood, it could be any of those things. For some it has been and will be in the face of real life persecutors with instruments of death and torture. Here the cost will be pain, disfigurement and perhaps even death. Friends, reality always comes with a price. Let me assure you though from this passage today, no matter which it is for you, should God call upon us to suffer for being his, he will stand with us as he did with each one of these. He will walk with us in the midst of the fire as he did with Shadrach,

Meshach and Abednego and as he did with Daniel in the lion's den. Now I could close our talk today at that point but I want to put some flesh on it. I want to tell you some modern stories of people I know. These are real people that I know in a society in Australia, so people like you and me who have experienced some of what I've talked about. I mentioned one man last week, we'll call him Joe, that's not his real name, married with five kids, wouldn't comply with dishonest practices in the company he worked for. He said no to them. He ended up long-term unemployed as a result.

[19 : 42] See Joe stood before his employers. Metaphorically he'd been asked, will you bow down to our statue, to our gods that we worship, to our gods we cannot live without, will you bow down? And metaphorically he said no way, I'm not going to do it. With dignity he told his bosses I'm not going to do it. Friends, you have to understand this. Our world is no different to the world of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Our world is a world set against God and his ways and sometimes it is going to be very hard for us to be Christian. But we know, don't we, that God's ways are right and the alternatives are shallow if not silly. But more than that, we know there's often a cost to be paid to choose the wise and the sensible and the God-fearing way. And if we're truly Christian we must choose it.

Let me tell you another story. Janet, again not her name, she's a woman of 35, she's attractive, she's able, she meets this guy that she comes to love very much. He is kind and generous, good husband material and the day comes when he puts the question to her. He asks her to marry him.

But he's not a Christian and she is. And she's convinced that God's will is that Christians should marry people who are Christians and not non-Christians. And the pressure of her upbringing and from society is that marriage is a great thing. Metaphorically, marriage is one of the great gods of our society, isn't it? Or at least relationships. And she's torn apart by her feelings. She loves this guy. She knows marriage is okay by God. She knows that she may never meet a Christian guy that she would get on with as well as this man. She knows what God wants of her though. And she says no to him.

Today this woman is in her late 80s. I know her. She never married. Friends, can you hear, sometimes very hard to be a Christian in our world. But we know that God's ways are right. We know that there is often a cost to be paid to choose to be wise and sensible and godly. But if we're Christians, we must choose it.

And when we do, God does not promise to rescue us. He doesn't promise that he'll always whisk us out and whisk us away in the nick of time. But that's not the important thing for us if we're Christian.

[22 : 25] The important thing is that we are with God and doing his will. And you know, of all the people that I know, this woman generally is one person who just overflows with the presence of God.

The church that she goes to, I often, every now and then I find people who have been there and they say it's a great place to be. They say it's so welcoming. I say there's a particular woman who welcomes everyone who comes into the church and looks after them. She looked after me.

I say, is her name? And they say, yes. She loves God. She radiates God and his presence to everyone she meets.

Now, let me tell you one more story. Again, fictitious name. His name is Eric. Eric was trained as a pilot during the war. And when he came back from the war, he had to choose a profession. He loved maths, although he liked the humanities as well. But he loved maths and he knew you could get 100% in maths. You couldn't do that in humanities. So being a very logical man, he chose to go into doing maths. He was very good at it. In fact, before long, he had a PhD in it and an associate professor at a prestigious Australian university. Eric had always been interested in Christian ministry, but knew he didn't have what it made to be a pastor of a church or perhaps even a missionary. But he didn't know what God required of him. He knew that this is a world which offered him many alternatives in how to serve God. For example, he could give his life to a career and that would be okay to do. He could study more, advance more, climb the academic or social ladder more. Or even with an academic salary, he could worship at the door of money.

But he decided, no, that wasn't going to be the way that he would live. And so he worked out what salary package the minister of his church was getting if you included the house.

[24 : 30] He decided that if he and the church thought that that was adequate for the minister, it would be adequate for him. He had six kids, mind you, and so he decided to give everything else he earned above that amount to gospel courses. At some periods in his life, my guess is that he was giving as much as 60% of his income away. Things didn't stop there. Eric knew of a developing country that needed academics. New universities were springing up and he knew those developing countries also needed people who could help set up Christian work amongst school and university students. So he took a position in this country, an academic position. He worked there. He gave up his extra time and extra money to support the Scripture Union and the equivalent of the student movement in that country. He used university computers to help Wycliffe Bible translators translate the Bible into the local language.

And he did so at the cost of no adequate superannuation and advancement within his discipline. So when he finally returned to Australia, he didn't have the superannuation packages that most of his contemporaries did. Friends, I want to tell you that the gods of our world are continually knocking at our door. They are continually uttering their siren calls, continually saying, come, come, come away, turn away from primary commitment to the real God, just a little bit here, a little bit there, continually beckoning us, continually calling us to bow the knee before them, continually offering us rewards or threatening us with punishment. And the most common and subtle and sophisticated gods of our time need to be named. They are sex, marriage, success, money, possessions, career, status, and our time.

But let me warn you that as subtle as these gods are, they are still false gods. And their servants will continually place these gods before us and say, will you play musical chairs with us?

Will you bow and scrape before these transitory things and give your life to them? Will you dance at the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe, and every other kind of musical instrument we play for you? Will you fall down and worship at the appropriate moment?

Friends, let me urge you to recognize the foolishness. Sometimes you just have to do what they did and laugh at it. But recognize the foolishness and stupidity and refuse their promises and resist their threats and make a stand. You see, friends, we are children of a real God, the real God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, and he alone must have our allegiance. So stand firm and do not bow.

[27 : 49] Let us pray. Father, we thank you. Because of the Lord Jesus, we know that you are indeed the real God, that there are no other gods to bow before but you. Please help us to give our allegiance to the Lord Jesus, to stand before him as Lord and Master, to give him our life rather than to waste it.

Father, we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.