

Standing

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[0 : 00] Daniel chapter 3 this morning, please. Daniel chapter 3. While you're turning there, thank you so much.! I want to thank Pastor for allowing me to be here this morning. I want to thank you for showing up, even though you knew I'd be here. It is a joy to be back here again, and a joy to see so many familiar faces, and a joy to see faces I don't recognize.

So, if you don't know me yet, count your blessings, and come up after service and introduce yourself. If I don't search you out, and I'd like to make some new friends, it's always good to make new friends.

Always good. We are back here living in Lincoln. We moved back from eastern Iowa, just south of the University of Iowa, Boo Hawkeyes, to out here, back to Lincoln this last May, and it's kind of different.

I mean, where it used to be a six-hour drive to come over and preach here, we now can make it in about five minutes. This is nice. And there's a Scooters along the way.

Did you know you can get coffee at Scooters today? Anyway. And yes, we stopped at the Scooters on normal on the way here today, and so I am very, very caffeinated.

[1 : 12] So, I asked Brother Matt when I should be shooting to be done. He said 1025. I'm not sure, having this much caffeine in me, if the message will make it that long or not. Oh, it will. Yeah.

Nevertheless, it is good to be here. Thank you so much for being in the house of the Lord this morning. If you found your place in Daniel chapter 3, and I certainly should have given you enough time by going on like that, would you stand with me, please, for the reading of God's Word this morning?

I'm going to read just a few verses throughout the chapter. We're going to read Daniel chapter 3, verse number 1. The Bible says, Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was three score cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits.

He set it up in the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. Now drop down to verse number 4. Now drop down to verse number 12.

There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon. This is men speaking to King Nebuchadnezzar and tattling, if you will, on other people.

[2 : 40] Set over the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, have not regarded thee. They serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

Then Nebuchadnezzar, in his rage and fury, commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king.

Verse number 16. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered after the king was enraged at them and accused them, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.

If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

[3 : 39] We're going to pray. And after we pray, I'm going to bring a few thoughts on standing. Standing. Let's pray together. Father, we thank you so much for the beautiful, beautiful morning that you've given us.

Lord, we thank you for the fellowship that we enjoy when we come to church with each other, the time that we can chat, the time that we can strengthen each other. Lord, we thank you for the song service and how we can join together and lift up our voices to you in praise.

Now, Lord, I pray that you would bless the preaching of your word. Lord, Holy Spirit, that you would fill me, that you would guide my mind, that you would control my words, that I would say only those things that are said according to your will and in your power.

I pray that you would move amongst the seats here this morning, that you would speak to people's hearts, that they would hear beyond my voice, to hear your still small voice speaking to their hearts. Lord, I pray that you would convict us, that you would encourage us, that you would strengthen us in you this morning.

Father, we pray especially if there's anyone here who does not know you as their personal Savior, that today would be the day that they know the joy of sins forgiven. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

[4 : 45] Amen. You may be seated. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were in a bad situation. You've got to remember the context of what's going on here. We're used to living in a society where if we don't agree with something, we have options to go and to make protests.

We have options to go and speak our minds at places. We have options to vote and change the people that we have elected to serve us.

Because that's truly the way our government is set up. Our government is not set up to rule over us. Our government is set up. We elect people to go to represent us, and the government is actually supposed to serve us.

Now, your opinions on how that may or may not be working is not necessarily applicable because that's the way it's supposed to be set up for us. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not have that kind of situation.

They were living under an absolute monarchy. Nebuchadnezzar was the supreme ruler, and he was set up so that whatever he said happened.

[5 : 54] There was no appeal. There was no court of going back and trying again. There was no right to speak your mind or to seek redress somewhere else. Whatever he said happened.

In our story, he had set up a huge golden image, and he had commanded that worship was to be made toward that image as if it were worship to him and of him.

In many of the pagan cultures that we read about in the Bible, the supreme rulers were considered as gods. This was true in Egypt. This was true in Babylon. This was true in Assyria. The people that were in charge, the absolute emperor and king, was not only considered a ruler, and he was an absolute ruler, and often a tyrant, and often very, very cruel, but he was also considered a god, and worship was made to that ruler.

Well, this put Shadrach, these three Hebrews, into a very delicate position because they were in exile. You've got to remember, Babylon had come in, they had conquered, they had taken spoil, they had taken prisoners, and they had hauled them off to Babylon.

Babylon. These were three young men who found themselves isolated in a foreign land. They were surrounded, not by familiar scenes, not by familiar places, not by familiar people, but they were surrounded by things entirely strange and different.

[7 : 21] They were surrounded by people of a different language. They were surrounded by people of different society. They were surrounded by sights and sounds and landscapes with which they were not familiar.

And they were surrounded by people of a different religion. They found themselves very isolated. Now, they were not the only ones taken from Judah and from Israel into this captivity.

Nevertheless, the number in comparison to the number of people living in Babylon, the number of those in exile, was very, very small. Babylon was a very, very large city. So you can imagine that they felt quite intimidated.

You can imagine they felt very out of place, much a fish out of water. And you can imagine that the temptation was very, very strong to just go along to get along. Keep your head down.

Don't make waves. Don't make trouble. Just keep quiet. Fly under the radar, as it were. But that's not the kind of thing that Shadrach and Meshach and Abednego were made out of.

[8 : 30] That was not their character. They were faced here with this tremendous decision because the decree had come down from Nebuchadnezzar. And to disobey was a sentence of death that you would be thrown into a burning, fiery furnace.

And this was no metaphor. This was no illustration. This was no, well, it might happen after you make 14 different appeals in the courts. As we're familiar with the story, we know that this was

something that was an immediate thing.

You disobeyed. You died. So in the midst of being out of place, in the midst of being terribly intimidated, in the midst of being threatened in their very lives, we find that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego when faced with a crisis point, and oh so often when we're reading these stories in the Bible, we are reading about people who come to a crisis point in their lives.

And sometimes multiple crisis points. Because that's the way life is, isn't it? You're living your life. You're going about your business. You're doing things you've normally done.

And all of a sudden, sometimes we see it coming and sometimes it's upon us with no warning at all. All of a sudden, there is a crisis point in our lives. And we have to make a decision just like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had to make a decision.

[9 : 42] We have to make a decision. How am I going to respond to this? What is my decision going to be when I am faced with this crisis point in my life?

And when we look at Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, we find that they chose to stand. They chose to be different. They chose not to go along with the crowd, not to go along with their society, not to go along with what would be the obvious pressure and intense pressure upon them.

But Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego chose to stand. Say, why would they do something like that? The first thing I want you to notice is that standing is commanded.

Standing is commanded. You see, there was a problem with these three young Hebrews. What Nebuchadnezzar was telling them to do was in direct opposition to what their God had told them to do.

It was not something that they could just gloss over, they could pass by, but rather it was something that was in direct violation of what they had been taught, the way they had been brought up, and what God had revealed to His chosen people.

[10 : 57] In Exodus chapter 20, verse number 4, the Bible says, to the Hebrew people, to the Israelites, thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth, thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them, for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children under the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.

Again, in Ephesians chapter, excuse me, I started to jump ahead of myself. That's what caffeine will do to you. So these young Hebrews knew what God had commanded.

They also knew what Nebuchadnezzar had commanded and the crisis point came when they had to decide, which direction do I turn? But they decided that I am going to stand for what God has told me.

I am going to stand. Oh, it's as if the apostle, as the words of the apostles, it is better, we must obey God rather than man. So they stood before the king.

We'll say, what that's, you know, that's Old Testament. Now, that still applies to us today. We're not to be involved in idolatry. We are not to bow down and worship other images.

[12 : 14] We are not to have anything. You thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy might. He is supposed to be first in our lives. Well, I don't have a statue in my apartment. I don't have an idol in my house.

No, but some of us have idols that aren't necessarily graven images. Some of us have an idol of our career, of our job, of our income. Some of us have an idol of our leisure time, our recreation.

Some of us have an idol of sports. Oh, I just got in trouble, right? Some of us have an idol of our car, believe it or not. I've known people who would not serve God because they had to take care of their car.

Their possessions drove them. Their off time drove them. Their career drove them. And, friend, whatever we put before God in our life becomes an idol.

Our relationship, our family, believe it or not, our relationship and our family, while very, very important and while something that God tells us we should treasure and God shows us how we should live, if we start putting our relationships and our families above God, our families just became an idol.

[13 : 21] We have to make sure that we're serving God first and that we're doing what God wants us to do in dealing with everything else in our lives. So we may not have the same graven image that they had to bow down to, but we do have the danger that we could make ourselves an idol.

We could decide just like them that when we're faced with a crisis point just like them, we could make an opposite decision. We could decide that I'm not going to stand for God. I'm not going to do what God wants me to do. The world out there would like us to live a certain way. Society out there would like us to do exactly what they do. They would like us to fit in, to blend in, to go along with the crowd, to bend our opinions and our thoughts and our actions to the way society is and if we disagree, to keep our mouths shut. They would like that. And so we're faced with that crisis point. Are we going to just go along to get along? Are we going to bow to Nebuchadnezzar's idol? Or are we going to stand for God? Because standing is commanded to us just as much as it was commanded to them. In Ephesians chapter 6, the Bible says, Wherefore, take unto you the whole armor of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand. [14:49] 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse number 58, Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

So we are faced with the same problem, the same crisis point, and we are faced with this multiple times. I mean, a person only has to turn on the news. A person only has to check out social media to find out.

A person, really, you don't even have to do that. You could just live your life and go about to find out that society just wants, is going one direction, and that direction is not God's direction. And there is a tremendous pressure upon each and every single born-again person to just shut our mouths. Keep quiet. Go along with the society. Go with the flow. Not be different. Not point anything out that's wrong.

Just, again, fly under the radar. And that temptation is pretty strong. Let's face it. There are a lot of folks that we could probably talk about, we could probably think, we might even be thinking about right now, and sometimes that person may be us who was faced with a crisis point and didn't stand. [16:05] Not one of us is perfect. Not one of us should look down at somebody else because all of us are faced with these crisis points, and sometimes we succeed, and sometimes we fail because we're human, and we mess up.

But we should look at these three Hebrews, and it should stir our hearts that we should also want to stand as they stood in the face of a dark generation, in the face of a world that is going against God, and quite frankly, always has.

We think we face new things, but the truth of the matter is it's a recycled version of everything that every Christian and born-again believer has always faced. It may be more intense. It may be using new methods and ways of going about things, but it's the same thing that everybody has always faced, always a temptation to be quiet, always a temptation to sit down, always a temptation to go along, always a temptation to cave in and compromise.

Nevertheless, we are commanded to stand and to stand for God. We are commanded. Jesus looked at us as it were, looked at His disciples, said, ye are the light of the world. That's what we're supposed to be.

We're supposed to shine out the love of God to a lost and dying world. And if we are shining that light, there are going to be things that are scurry away in the darkness that do not want to see that light nor appreciate that light nor go to that light.

[17:27] Nevertheless, we are to shine out that light. But the temptation and what we're, I don't want to say forced, but threatened to do is to put our lights under a bushel.

And of course, all the kids down at Junior Church know the song, This Little Am I, I'm going to let it shine. Hide it under a bushel, No. And that's easy, it's easier to sing that when you're a kid.

It's a little bit harder when you're an adult and you're dealing with neighbors and you're dealing with family and you're dealing with work and you're dealing with society in general. Nevertheless, that's what we're called to do.

We are called to be the light of the world and shine Jesus' light. We are called to stand, to stand for something, not to stand up and say, this is what I am or this is what I think, but rather to stand up and say, this is what God says and here I stand.

So standing is commanded, not only that, but standing is conspicuous. Standing is conspicuous. You can, when I, I don't know about you, but when I read the Bible, when I read in general, my mind works by making it almost into a little video.

[18 : 39] I see the events as I'm reading. I see the events happening in my mind. It becomes less just cold black words on a white page. It becomes more of a video in my mind and it stirs my heart sometimes and it challenges me sometimes.

I can see this scene as it's set forth in the Bible. I can see this huge idol set up in the middle of a plain because that's where it said it was. It's the middle of a plain and in the Midwest, we know what plains are, don't we?

I can see this huge idol set up in the middle of this huge plain. I can see thousands and thousands of people surrounding this idol and they're milling and if you've ever been in the midst of a large crowd, you understand what I mean.

They're milling and they're talking and there's just this, this constant hum and buzz of conversation that you have trouble making out any particular words because there's so many people and there's so many conversations and there's so much movement that everything just blurs into one continuous hum of activity and noise and then the music starts playing.

I don't know if it came from a platform next to the idol, if it came from different stations around the outside, wherever it was, the music started playing and again, if you've ever been in a crowd that's gathered together for a specific reason, before things start, there's this constant hum, there's this constant activity, this constant rustle of conversation, but as things start, that dies down.

[20 : 04] It becomes quieter and in my mind, I see that movement of that huge crowd still and I see the conversation, the hum of thousands of people talking, I hear it quiet and in my mind's eye, I see starting maybe closest to the idol or maybe closest to wherever the music was coming from, I see row after row after row of people falling to their knees, facing this idol and falling to their knees.

Just perhaps a wave moving outward from the idol. Thousands of people kneeling down, except for three.

Can you imagine what it looked like? everybody's knelt down, all in the surrounding area and who knows how large this plane was or how many thousands of people may have been there and in the midst of all these people kneeling down stood three figures.

You can imagine that they drew a lot of attention and a lot of attention immediately. They stood out. They stood up and they stood out.

There was no hiding, there was no drawing back, there was no camouflage, there was no standing in the corner and hoping nobody noticed. They were on the spot.

[21 : 29] Now the funny thing about this is, as I mentioned earlier, they were not the only people taken into captivity. They were not the only Hebrews and I doubt very much, I have no way of proving this by the Bible, just my supposition, so if you want to disagree with me, you're perfectly welcome to disagree with me.

But I've got to imagine that there were other Hebrews there in that huge crowd along with them, but there were only three that stood. There were other people there that were under the same command to stand as these three, but only these three stood.

In my mind's eye, again, I imagine somebody who was maybe, before the music started playing, Shadrach and Meshach and Abednego were surrounded by other Jews because we tend to congregate together, don't we?

With people of like faith, with people of like backgrounds, they came from the same place, they spoke the same language. You can imagine that they would congregate together even in the midst of a crowd. And these others knelt down.

And these three stood. I can imagine in my mind's eye somebody kneeling down next to them and you'll forgive me, I'm not going to kneel down because once I kneel down, I may not get back up.

[22 : 42] But I can imagine that they knelt down and they looked up and there are those three standing and say, Shadrach! Shadrach, what is the matter with you, man? Can you not see what's going on here?

Get down! This is not good. You are making the rest of us look bad. Do you know that King Nebuchadnezzar, he's going to throw you in the furnace?

Do you not realize this? And if he wants to just because you're standing, did you know he might throw me in there too even though I'm not standing? What is wrong with you? Can't you just get down?

Okay, don't kneel down all the way. Can you at least crouch? Can you at least go halfway? Okay, you don't have to go all the way to kneeling. But can you at least, you know, maybe bend at the

waist?

Do something. Help me out here. And I can imagine Shadrach looking at him and saying, what are you doing down there? Why aren't you up here with me?

[23 : 41] That's not where you're supposed to be. You're supposed to be here. You're supposed to be standing next to me. You're supposed to be standing for God just like me. Can you imagine the pressure?

The pressure from knowing that what they were doing carried the death penalty? The pressure of knowing that everyone was looking at them?

Because there was no hiding amidst that crowd. The pressure of knowing that other people who should have been supporting them and should have been standing with them weren't. That's a tremendous amount of pressure.

And yet in the middle of all that pressure, in the middle of all that intimidation, these three men stood strong.

You know, I've often heard through the years that I've been saved when people are talking about this, I've often heard them talking about the three Hebrew boys or the three Hebrew children. Can I share with you that I don't care what age these people happen to be?

[24 : 41] These were men. It takes someone of character to stand in the midst of that kind of pressure. It takes someone of extreme character to stand in the midst of intimidation.

It takes somebody with a fervent love for God. It is so easy to say, I love God. Stand and show me. You can kneel and say, I love God.

I don't believe you. Quite frankly, the other people kneeling next to you don't believe you either. There are times where if you are going to say something, you need to do something to back it up. It's time, there are times you have to put actions to your words. You know the old saying, your talk talks and your walk talks, but your walk talks louder than your talk talks? I hope I got that right. It's an old saying, but it's true. We often think of people probably whose walk does not match their talk. I was working in a factory one time. Years ago, I worked in a factory.

[25 : 43] I worked there for 15 years and I worked with a variety of different people. And there was one woman I was working with and she was a profane woman. She was, for lack of a better word, she was vile.

I'm sorry, that sounds really, really harsh, but that's a good descriptive word. She was wicked and her mouth was wicked and her actions were wicked and her opinions were wicked.

And I think you get the idea. Working in a factory, you can imagine, it got pretty bad. Well, one day, the door opened up and I was able to witness to her. You got to look for your opportunities, especially when you're at work because my time is being paid for by my employer.

But I saw an opportunity and I took it. So I witnessed to her and she looked at me and she said, oh yeah, I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal savior when I was a child down in, I think she said Missouri.

And I will tell you the truth, she had, I'm surprised she didn't get insulted because I stood there with my mouth hanging wide open. Do you believe her? It's not my place to judge her.

[26 : 47] It's really not. But can I tell you that the way she acted and what she told me didn't match. What we say we are should be evident by what we do.

People should never be shocked to find out we're a Christian. People should never be shocked to find out that we love Jesus.

Everything about us, the Bible calls it our conversation. When we think of conversation, we think of what we say. The Bible, when it uses the word conversation, means the entirety of our being.

Everything about us that speaks. And our actions speak, as the saying, again, saying goes, our actions speak louder than words. They should never, people should never be surprised.

Our actions, what we do, should always match up with what we say. If we do that though, we're going to be conspicuous. We're going to stand out. And we are going to have pressure and sometimes intimidation against us because standing can be a lonely thing.

[27 : 54] Being, nobody really likes to be conspicuous, do we? Nobody really likes to be the only one standing. But if we're going to stand for Christ, there are going to be times we are the only one standing.

If we're going to do what God wants us to do, there are going to be times when we are conspicuous because nobody around us is going to stand with us. It's going to happen.

Standing is conspicuous. Not only that, but standing is condemned by the world. Standing is condemned by the world. We already mentioned how these three Hebrews knew that they were going to be thrown into a fiery furnace if they stood.

They knew the condemnation that they were facing. And as we go on with the story, which we won't read for time's sake, as we go on with the story, we find out that indeed it did happen. They were brought before Nebuchadnezzar.

They were condemned and they were thrown into the furnace. They were condemned by the world. And if we stand, if we stand and say, nevertheless, we are not going to bow down.

[28 : 53] We are not going to do what you told us to do. We are going to obey God rather than man. There are times where the world is going to condemn us. The world is going to dislike us. We are going to hear harsh things.

We are going to suffer unjust actions. The events of the last couple of weeks should certainly show us that this is the truth. It doesn't take a great deal of memory, does it?

We've had an illustration brought to our eyes within the last couple of weeks that just standing for what is right and being conspicuous.

I don't think there's anyone that can doubt that the person I'm speaking of was a very conspicuous person. That very often when we do that, we are condemned by the world.

We will be yelled at. We will be unjustly accused. We will be hated. And sometimes, sometimes it comes down to the ultimate price. Oh, this is America.

[29 : 52] It can't happen. It happened two weeks ago. Not only that, but yes, this is America. But I'm telling you right now, today, it is happening all over this world. Have you heard about the Christian villages being burnt down?

Check it out. You're not going to find it on CNN. But check it out. There are people that are standing up for Christ that are suffering martyrdom today.

Now as a boy, I had to drive a, drive. They didn't let junior high kids drive the bus. I had to ride a bus to school. And it just happened that on the way out and on the way back, there was a broadcast by a man named Paul Harvey.

Who remembers Paul Harvey? Good, I'm not the only old one here. Okay. I just insulted half the congregation right there. What do you mean me? What? What? Okay, you get a pass.

Paul Harvey was fun to listen to. He was, and he was interesting. But there was times where he had a commentary, and part of the commentary he used this phrase, it is not one world.

[31 : 04] Can I tell you that because we're Americans and we're used to the way things are here, that's not the way it is in all the world. It is not one world. Standing is condemned by the world, and standing for Christ.

Well, how can standing for Christ be condemned by the world? We're just trying to show them God's love. We're just trying to show them that they can be saved. We're just trying to help them. Nevertheless, because the world hated our Lord, we shouldn't be surprised if they hate us just because we love our Lord.

2 Timothy, in chapter 3, the apostle Paul writes, Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. Just because we stand for God and we obey God, we shouldn't be surprised.

As a matter of fact, we should expect that we will suffer persecution. Jesus himself said in the Gospel of John, If the world hate you, you know that it hated me before it hated you.

If you are of the world, the world would love his own, but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord.

[32 : 08] If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also, but all these things they do unto you for my name's sake.

Because they know not him that sent me. Standing for God is not appreciated out there. Standing up and saying, No, this is right, and no, this is wrong, because that's what this book says.

Not because that's what society says. Not that's because what science falsely called says. But because this book says so, and because God says so, this is right, and this is wrong, because it says it in here.

That is hated. Saying, No, I will not just go along. I will not be a sheep that is led by the world. I will be a sheep that is led by my Savior. That is condemned by the world.

That is hated by the world. Say, Brother Scott, you are not encouraging me. So far, you've talked about being conspicuous and everybody knowing what we are. So far, you've talked about standing being commanded and that I'm supposed to obey God, but because of that, it's going to be conspicuous and I'm going to stand out and I'm going to be different and people are not going to appreciate it because it's condemned by the world and I may have to suffer for standing for God. [33 : 25] Oh, that we could suffer for Jesus. I am so sorry, but we have lost the value of suffering as a church.

We have lost the fact that suffering for Christ is one of the greatest things that we could possibly do. We think that God is out there to just shower down blessings upon us and to make our lives easy and to make our path clear and to make the sun shine upon us every single day and let me ask you, what are we doing for Him?

We want so much for Him and oh, He is so generous, isn't He? Oh, He is so loving. Oh, He is so much better to us than we ever could consider, than we could ever expect, that we could ever dream.

He is so much better to us. And what do we return to Him? Brother Scott, I don't know why you're preaching to me that way. I'm in church Sunday morning. I'm giving up my Sunday morning. Congratulations. Say, what about you, Brother Scott? I'm in the same boat you're in. Believe me, before I preach this to you, I preach it to me. before I ask people to kneel down at the altar and get right, I have to get right myself.

[34 : 37] What has it cost you lately to stand for God? What has it cost me lately to stand for God?

What has it ever cost me in my entire life to stand for God? Have I ever had somebody in my face because I stood for God? Yes. Cursed me out? Threatened my job? Yes.

20 years ago. 20 years ago. I am ashamed to say it's been that long. I don't enjoy somebody getting my face.

I'm not talking about being irritating. I'm not talking about being a jerk. Okay? Please get me, don't think you gotta go out there and be that Christian that rubs everybody the wrong way. Just standing for God, vocally, publicly, living our lives righteously should be enough for somebody to get upset with us.

Unjustly. Again, this is not a license to be a jerk. Say, Brother Scott, you are still not encouraging me. Last point. And all God's people said amen.

[35 : 44] Standing is not only condemned by the world, but standing is commended by God. I want you to notice, most of us who have been in church for a while, we know this story forwards and backwards.

We know that the Hebrew men, these three Hebrews, stood for God. We know that they were condemned by the world. We know that they were thrown into the fiery furnace and we also know that they were delivered miraculously.

That God was there in that furnace with them. That they came out of that furnace with their bonds burnt off and not even the smell of smoke upon them.

If you have ever been outside to a bonfire, you know exactly how hard that is not to smell smoke. I don't know what it is about me, but I seem to be a smoke magnet. If I'm outside at a bonfire, if I sit on this, the bonfire's right here, if I sit on this side of the bonfire, the smoke goes this way.

So because nobody enjoys having a face full of smoke, I get up and I move around to this side of the bonfire and guess what happens? The smoke goes this way. I don't understand it, but there it is.

[36 : 51] And if you've been around somebody, if you've ever been around somebody who smokes a lot, you know that it clings to you. That smoke from the bonfire will make you smell for a little bit. Smoke from somebody continuously smoking cigarettes clings to them.

It gets into their pores. And yet these three men came out of that furnace and the smell of the smoke did not even cling unto them. Why is that? It's because God commended their standing for Him.

They stood for God and God stood with them. We go through the Bible and we read time after time after time. In this very book, we read about Daniel standing for God and refusing to pray only to Nebuchadnezzar, but praying to God as He always had done and being thrown into a den of lions and God showed His commendation of Daniel standing, even though the world condemned Him and threw Him into the den of lions.

God showed His commendation, His approval of what Daniel did by delivering Him from the lion's den. And all of us would say, oh, I want to have God's commendation on my life. If we want to have God's approval on our life like that, you've got to realize we're going to have to go through that condemnation first.

You don't get delivered from a furnace you were never in. You don't get delivered from a den of lions that no one threw you into. We need to change our minds about condemnation and we need to change our minds about suffering and we need to change our minds about hardship and look at it like I am suffering for God.

[38 : 25] I'm not suffering because I did something stupid. I'm not suffering because I was difficult. If I can honestly say I'm suffering for Jesus, we should look at that as a commendation and look for God and what God is working in us and through us to do through that and look for a way that we can give a lasting testimony to how good God is.

Say, Brother Scott, they were condemned, they were thrown in, they were delivered. That's a wonderful thing. I want to see that. Sometimes you're not delivered. Sometimes you're not delivered. Turn back real quick, if you will, to Acts chapter 7.

Acts chapter 7. In Acts chapter 7, we have the story of Stephen in the early church. In Acts chapter 7, Stephen was hauled before the Jewish council, was hauled before the Sanhedrin, and he was condemned.

He stood before them and he preached to them and he laid it down. He stood upright, he stood firm, and he glorified God.

Say, what did that get him? Verse number 57. They cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and ran upon him with one accord and cast him out of the city and stoned him.

[39 : 38] That's what it got him. It did not get him a miraculous deliverance. It did not get him an instantaneous healing. It did not get him freedom. He stood for God and it got him stoned.

Say again, Brother Scott, you're not encouraging me. I want you to consider three other verses before you tell me that Stephen wasted his life, before you tell me that Stephen was not commended by God, before you tell me that Stephen's suffering was for nothing.

I want you to consider three other verses. Verse number 50, well, four verses. Look up at verse number 55. But he, that being Stephen, he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God and said, behold, I see the heavens open and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.

I would say that's a commendation. I would say that that's something I would long to have. I would say that that is Jesus Christ commending what Stephen has done and rewarding him beyond anything that most of us can ever expect to be rewarded with.

But that's not the only commendation that God showed for Stephen. In Acts chapter 8, notice if you will in verse number 4, therefore, what's that therefore refer back to?

[41 : 09] The martyrdom of Stephen. Stephen being stoned. Therefore, they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. See, at first, the church in Jerusalem stayed in Jerusalem.

but that was not God's plan. God's plan was for Christianity to be spread out. They were supposed to go out into all the world and preach the gospel. But they huddled close together and so, through Stephen's persecution, they were sent out.

They were scared and they ran, but as they ran, they preached the gospel. Turn now, if you will, to Acts chapter 11. Say, how do you know they preached the gospel because of Stephen?

Acts chapter 11 and verse number 19. Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phenix and Cyprus and Antioch preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.

And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene which when they were come to Antioch spake unto the Grecians preaching the Lord Jesus Christ. Stephen died testifying and standing for the Lord Jesus Christ and God gave him that tremendous vision and that tremendous thing that he was able to see and the approval that he was able to see even before he died.

[42 : 24] But more than that, because Stephen stood for God, God used that to accomplish his purposes in the church to see the gospel preached far and wide.

Why? Because one man stood. Because one man stood. Brethren, I just have one question for us this morning. And I do mean us.

One question. Will you stand? Will we stand? Will I stand? You know, it's going to be a whole lot easier when you come to that crisis point to make the right decision if you make the right decision before you come to the crisis point.

If you know what you're going to do before you get to that crisis, it makes it so much easier to make the decision during the crisis. So I ask you again. Will you stand?

Normally, right now, I have everybody bow their heads, close their eyes. I do. Normally I do. Not today. Not today. If the Holy Spirit has moved in your heart and you say, Brother Scott, I will stand for Christ.

[43 : 33] Stand up. Don't look around. Don't see who's saying sat. Don't. It's none of your business. You worry about you. Praise God. Let's pray together. Let's pray together.