

Cmml Missionary Conference 1995-07 Daniel 3

by William MacDonald

William MacDonald highlights the unwavering faith of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the face of persecution as a powerful example for Christians today.

Duration: 42:56

Scripture: Proverbs 22:1, Matthew 6:33, Romans 12:2, James 1:12, 1 Peter 3:15

Topics: "Conference"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the presence and power of Jesus in the trials of life. He emphasizes that we come to know Jesus more intimately through difficult circumstances rather than in times of ease. The speaker uses the example of Daniel and his friends in the fiery furnace to illustrate the importance of standing for God in a hostile society. He highlights the supernatural wisdom and knowledge that God bestowed upon Daniel as a result of his faithfulness. The sermon concludes with the reminder that God's grace is available to believers in times of trial, providing them with the strength to endure.

Transcript

Before we turn to the word tonight, I'd just like to do a little damage control from last night. I gave the address, I recommended the Berean Call, the little paper, the Berean Call, if you want to keep up in touch with what's going on in the evangelical world. And I gave the address, and some people thought I said Ben Oregon, the man's name Ben.

The real address is the Berean Call, Post Office Box 7019, Bend, B-E-N-D, Oregon. And the zip code is there, in case you haven't ordered it already. Secondly, there was some confusion, apparently, by two men that I named.

These are two men who are taking a valiant stand for the Lord, and some people thought that I got the names mixed up. One is John MacArthur, and he's down at the Grace Community Church, I think in Panorama City, California. He's a man who dares to speak out for the truth, for the word of God.

The other one is Jim McCarthy, who is one of my colleagues in the Discipleship Intern Training Program. And that gives me the natural transition just to mention the book that he has just written, called The Gospel According to Rome. I would say it's the definitive work today, contrasting what Rome teaches and what the word of God teaches.

And it's selling here at the ridiculous price of ten dollars. Pardon? Only Gentiles pay retail. And I can't mention that one without mentioning this one, too.

Dave Hunt, *A Woman Rides the Beast*. It's really a very excellent book. And Dave Hunt in this correlates the church today with the harlot woman in Revelation 17 and 18.

And that one's also ten dollars available at the bookstore. The third thing is that I was reading last night from the New King James, and some of the folks came up to me afterwards and said, well, you know, you've read words that aren't in the New King. Well, it's a strange thing.

When they publish Bibles today, they think nothing of changing the next edition of the next printing of the Bible. And that's what happens in connection with the word features and countenance. And maybe some of you, if you have the New King James, you detected a difference last night.

Be not alarmed. It's just that between printings, they take liberties like that. Sometimes they really correct it upward, make valid corrections.

So now we're going to turn to Daniel chapter three, which we had time to read the whole chapter, but we'll start. We might abbreviate the names of the instruments in the band here and just call it the band. Nebuchadnezzar, the king, made an image of gold whose height was sixty cubits, and its width six cubits.

He set it up in the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all of the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar, King Nebuchadnezzar, had set up.

They stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. And then, of course, the herald comes and he cries out, O peoples, nations, and languages, whenever they hear this band striking up, they are to fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. And whoever doesn't do it is going to be cast into a burning, fiery furnace.

Well, everything proceeded on schedule except those troublesome Jewish fellows. Therefore, at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews, spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, O King, live forever. You, O King, have made a decree, and they told him what he already knew very well.

They rehearsed all the significant details, and then they said in verse 12, There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O King, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up.

Then Nebuchadnezzar, enraged and fury, commanded them to be brought in. He said, Is it true what I hear about you? And they said, It is true. And he said, Well, I'll give you one more chance.

I'll give you one more chance. And when the band strikes up, if you don't fall down and worship, you'll be cast into the fire. But I'll give you a chance to think it over.

And they said, We don't need any time to think it over. Our mind is already made up. We can tell you the answer right now.

Verse 16, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the King, O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us from your hand, O King. But if not, let it be known to you, O King, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.

Man, that's courage, isn't it? That's bravery. That's determination. There's a very definite spiritual progression in these first three chapters of Daniel.

Last night we saw Daniel himself in the lead, and there were three of his peers with him, and they were watching him in a way that maybe Daniel didn't even realize he was discipling three fellows. He was telling them how to stand for God in a hostile society. He was telling them it's better to go to heaven with a good conscience than stay on earth with a bad conscience.

And he was giving them a practical definition of what it means to be a man with spine who's willing to pay the price for God and for principles of the word of God. And as a result of Daniel's stand for the Lord, what does the Lord do? Well, he just poured in wisdom and knowledge into the mind of that dear young Jewish fellow. I mean, that wasn't something he got by going to school or by reading widely.

It was a supernatural wisdom that God gave him that he could, for instance, interpret a dream. And that brings us to chapter two, doesn't it? A very nice transition, because God's going to let him put that information, that wisdom that he got to use. So here we have Nebuchadnezzar.

Now he has a dream, and he has all kinds of soothsayers and magicians and astrologers and all the rest there. And of course, he has Daniel and his friends as well. And he calls him and he says, Now, I want you to tell me the dream.

Not the interpretation of it. I want you to tell me the dream. You know, I think that he suspected that his own soothsayers were phonies.

I really do. Why? Because anybody could. If you have a very little sanctified imagination, you could make up an interpretation for any dream that they would tell you.

Yeah, we could do that. I think we could get together tonight and somebody come to us with a dream, and we could make up quite a nice interpretation of it, couldn't we? And I think he suspected that. He says, It's not enough for you to tell me the interpretation of the dream.

You have to tell me the dream. They said, King, that's humanly impossible. Of course, it was humanly impossible.

And that's where Daniel comes upon the scene. And Daniel is able to tell him not just the interpretation. He's able to tell him the dream.

He's able to tell him what he saw in that image. Why? Because Daniel had stood for God in chapter one. That's why.

The secret of the Lord is for those who fear him. And so Daniel tells him that he saw this great image, and it had a head of gold, and it had breasts of silver, and it had thighs of brass, and it had legs of iron, and

feet of iron and clay. And Daniel let these words slip out of his mouth, and they went right to the head of the king.

He said, You, O king, are the head of gold. And you know, I think that the king shut off his hearing aid at that point. He developed a king-sized case of eye disease.

He had taken too much vitamin I. His ego was inflated beyond description. I am that head of... He should have listened to the rest of the interpretation, to the time when the Lord Jesus Christ would come back to the earth and destroy the kings of the earth and reign as king of kings and lord of lords. But he didn't.

As long as I'm that head of gold, there's only one thing to do, and that's to make a golden statue and have people bow down and worship it. Kind of predecessor of secular humanism, wasn't he? Dethrone the true God and have man worship men. And so what we have in chapter three seems to be the result of what the king had learned in chapter two.

And so he causes this image to be made 90 feet tall and nine feet wide, about the size of an eight-story building. Not bad. It may have been.

It wasn't necessarily the image of a person. It may have been a pillar or an obelisk. When I think of it, I think of something like the Washington Monument with different dimensions, of course.

It was overlaid with gold. It wasn't solid gold. You know, there isn't enough gold in the world to make a Washington Monument, and there certainly wasn't at that time either.

It's coated with gold. What a description of the world, huh? Just a facade. Not solid, not the real McCoy, but just that which looks good to the outward appearance.

And notice the prominence of the number six in this. Sixty cubits tall, six cubits wide. Isn't it wonderful how the men who wrote the Bible, who gave us the Bible, they never had a chance to collaborate.

Daniel never had a chance to sit down and talk it over with John, who was going to write something like that in Revelation 13. You know, the mark of the B666. Everything about this monument spoke of man.

Six, the number of man. Six, short of seven, the number of perfection. Clearly all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

And then this enormous festivity is planned where people will come from all over the provinces for the dedication of this great image, and the people are commanded to bow down and worship. The king didn't only want a unified government, he wanted a unified religion as well. That's exactly the direction in which we're heading today in the world.

I can never read this without thinking of an experience I had some years ago when a friend and I were in Rome, and we heard that the Pope was going to make an appearance, a little white figure far, far off in the distance of the window. We went there to St. Peter's Square, and the square was just packed shoulder to shoulder with people. Then we waited, and all you could really see was the white smock there at the window, at least all I could see.

When he appeared at the window, the people fell to their knees in St. Peter's Square, all but three. Boy, if you ever want to feel conspicuous, if you ever want to swim against the flow, that's it. Well, my friend was standing, and I was standing, and next to us was a dear woman from Canada, and all I remember her

saying was, this is ridiculous, really wonderful.

I tell you, this passage of scripture came alive. Well, some of these Chaldeans saw that. They saw these Jews that weren't vowing to worship the image.

The green-eyed monster comes upon the scene. Did you notice that? They reported him to the king. They realized that they had been shown great favor by the king.

There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon. Get it? These are men that you've advanced. They hadn't been advanced like that, and they resented the fact that Jews were.

The hatred of the world against the people of God is really something to behold, isn't it? It's very, very unusual, and sometimes I think we're kind of taken off guard when it comes. The media in the United States today, they don't miss a chance to lug away that anything has to do with Christ or the people of God, do they? That's the way it should be. That's exactly the way it should be.

We can't expect a crown from a world that gave him only a cross. We can't expect to be treated better than our Savior was treated when he was here on earth. The media belongs to the world.

It doesn't belong to the church. It belongs to the world, and it reports the world's attitude towards things. This has been going on down through the centuries, and it's certainly getting virulent today in the world in which we live.

Thank God for these three fellows. They had learned a lesson from Daniel. They watched Daniel in operation, and now they said, that's what we must do.

Happy is he who dares to be in the right with two or three. Happier still is the man who dares to stand alone against the world. That's what Athanasius said.

Athanasius contra mundum. Athanasius against the world. That's what the world believes.

I don't believe that, and I'll stand for God in this situation. So the king gives them one more chance. It's almost humorous.

The king's reaction. Is it true? Can I believe my ears? That you dare to oppose what I'm doing? He didn't believe that any mortal upon the earth could have the presumption to dispute his will, and he certainly couldn't conceive that anyone under his patronage, anyone to whom he has shown favor, would dare to resist his bidding. Is it true? He said, I can't believe that it would ever be true.

It's really condescension on his part even to have to ask the question. And you know, he says here, what God is it that is able to deliver you, to rescue you? What God is it? Is it who is able to rescue you? You know, you can't say something like that in God's hearing and get away with it. God in heaven registered that when he heard those words, and he said, I'll show him.

Makes me think of a second cousin of mine some years ago, a fellow that had been brought up under the sound of the gospel. He knew the gospel just as well as we know it here tonight, but he had resisted the entreaties of the Spirit of God. He was married, he had a 10-year-old boy.

And one day he was walking down the streets of the town there, and a dear Christian woman came up to him and said, don't you think it's time you return to the Lord? And he said, what's he ever done for me? Listen, you can't say that. You can't say that and get away with it. That weekend he and another man got on a boat, a ferry to take him across from this island to the mainland.

He had a 10-year-old boy with him. They drove off the ferry onto the ramp, and instead of going up, they went down. Nobody knows why.

And they all drowned. That was the weekend after he said, what's he ever done for me? You can't talk like that. I'll never be revoked in the world.

And God heard what Nebuchadnezzar said this day. What God is able to deliver you. These fellows weren't against the government.

They weren't creating a revolution. They believed that their responsibility was to obey, to pay, to pray, as our responsibility is today as far as human government is concerned. But they also believed it's a higher obligation.

We ought to obey God and not man. They had watched Daniel in chapter 1, and doubtless they could think of all of the rationalizations that Daniel had gone through, and maybe they could have rationalized it, too. They could have said, well, we could do it once.

We could bow down once and never do it again. That would satisfy the authorities. They could have said, well, our advancement in the kingdom, certainly, I mean, we're right in front of the king.

He's the one who has advanced us, and certainly we wouldn't get any more promotions if we failed to do it. Or they could have said what Daniel could have said, well, we'll do it, but our hearts aren't in it. God knows that our hearts aren't in it.

They could have said, well, it's just a physical thing. It's just the bending of the knees that has nothing to do with the heart, and the heart is right with God. I mean, the mental gymnastics that you could go through when you think of a burning, fiery furnace.

Marvelous, you know. There's nothing that would create concentration like that. Or they could have said, we have to live, don't we? Somebody said that the Spurgeon wants, we have to live, don't we? He said, I don't grant that.

He said, we have to obey God. I like what Vance Havner wrote. He said, Christians don't have to live.

They have only to be faithful to Jesus Christ. When a man becomes a Christian, he loses the right to his own life. Isn't that good? When a man becomes a Christian, he loses the right to his own life.

He's not his own. He's bought with a price, the precious blood of Christ. He's the personal property of Jesus Christ.

Bought and prayed for with a price. For him, living and dying are incidental. He's here to glorify Jesus Christ, whether by life or by death.

Whether he lives, he lives unto the Lord. Whether he dies, he dies unto the Lord. Whether he lives or dies, it's unto the Lord.

He counts not his life dear to himself. To live is Christ, and to die is gain. Anything that compromises his all-out devotion to the Savior must be refused at all costs.

A pinch of incense to Caesar may seem innocent enough to others, but to a Christian it's anathema. For he knows but one Lord, and he will not by life or by death pay even a gesture of allegiance to another. If a pagan guild would compromise his vows, he would lose his job first.

He doesn't have to eat. He only has to be faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ. And that's what they were saying here in so many words by the action that they took.

Van Tabner goes on to say, The desire of a spiritual man is to die right rather than to live wrong. Look at that. The desire of a spiritual man is to die right rather than to live wrong.

A sure mark of a spiritual person is his nonchalance about living. I haven't thought of that. A sure mark of a spiritual man is his nonchalance about living.

The earth-loving, body-conscious Christian looks upon death with numb terror in his heart, but as he goes on to live in the Spirit, he becomes increasingly careful of the kind of life he lives while he's here. It makes me think of a California highway patrolman in our assembly, and I was speaking to him the other night at the prayer meeting, and he said, One of the first things I noticed after I trusted Christ was I was no longer afraid to die. Isn't that good? Nobody had ever given me that as a way of assurance of salvation before.

But it's true. He said, One of the first things I noticed after I trusted Christ as my Savior, I was no longer afraid to die. He had a most unusual conversion.

I'll just make a digression to tell you about Angelo Costanza, his motorcycle officer. We have another fellow in our assembly, Tom Rodriguez, who is a motorcycle officer for the city of Hayward. One day Tom Rodriguez had a brand new motorcycle, a police motorcycle, and he was parked by the side of the road talking to somebody, and Angelo made the mistake of driving by.

He saw this new motorcycle. Well, you know, it's a club. So he stopped, and he started talking with Tom.

Tom was by then a true believer in the Lord Jesus, and Angelo said to him, Would you mind if I took a ride around the block on the new bike? And Tom said, No, go ahead. But as soon as he got off, Tom said, What have I done? You know, he let a perfect stranger, even if he is an officer, take the bike and go around. So when Angelo got back, he got a dose of the gospel, and he's in fellowship in the assembly today, and his wife and a lovely family.

Wonderful, isn't it? Be careful stopping to admire a policeman's motorcycle. The spiritual man will not compromise. He'll not purchase a few extra days of life at the cost of compromise or failure.

He wants everything to be right, and he's happy to let God decide how long he shall live. He knows that he can afford to die now that he's in Christ, but he knows that he cannot afford to do wrong, and this knowledge becomes a gyroscope to stabilize his thinking and his acting. That's beautiful, isn't it? Here's some lovely expressions there.

Body cost. Oh, they could have rationalized. They could have said, Really, Lord, to ask us to go into a burning, fiery furnace is really asking too much, isn't it? Or they could have said, Well, an idol is nothing, you know.

It's just a column overlaid with gold, and we would only be paying political homage to it. We wouldn't be paying religious homage to it at all. They could have said, Better to be a live dog than a dead lion.

That's a good one. That's a good one. He who fights and runs away lives to fight another day.

Or they used to say, Better be red than dead. They didn't think of anything like that. Their eyes were fixed on the devotedness to him and doing the right thing as far as the word of God is concerned.

And so this is what they said. We have no need to answer you in the matter. You don't have to give us any time to think it over.

It's better for us to burn than to play the coward. Better to die than to deny the truth. They said, Our God is able to deliver us from the burning fire.

You know, all true discipleship rests upon the foundation of faith. They're vitally linked together. The life of faith and the life of discipleship.

And they had faith in their God, and they said, Our God is able to deliver us from the burning fire. And he will deliver us from your hand, O King. And it's wonderful, isn't it? How that speaks to us today.

Somebody here may be in the deepest trial of your life at the present time. You're perplexed. Why has this happened to that kind? Understand this.

Never forget that the God who allowed this trial to come into your life is able to deliver you from it, too. Able to deliver you from it in a miraculous way. And the purpose of this experience is to show the mighty power of God.

And you would plan it exactly the same way if you had his wisdom, love, and power. Hard to believe that, isn't it? Hard to believe that you would plan your life exactly the same way if you had the wisdom that God has, if you loved as God loves, and if you had the power that God has. But you have to believe it's the Lord, my God, whom I serve, is able to deliver.

I have a question for you. I've known a young couple some years ago, and he had a tumor of the brain, and they were crying to God for complete healing, and they came across Psalm 118, 17. And they claimed it as a promise from God.

I will not die but live. Well, I explain it, it's a great comfort to me by what they said next. But if not.

That's the way I claim the promises of God. But if not. But if not, we still won't bow down or worship the gold image that you have set up.

My, that's magnificent, isn't it? See, I think our claiming of the promises of God must absolutely allow God to do what he wishes to do, and that our interpretation might not be accurate. The narrative of the great boldness and marvelous deliverance of the three holy children, or rather champions, is well calculated to excite in the minds of believers firmness and steadfastness in upholding the truth in the teeth of tyranny and in the very jaws of death. Let young men, especially since these were young men, learn from their example, both in matters of faith and religion and matters of integrity and business, never to sacrifice their conscience.

Lose all rather than lose your integrity. When all else is gone, still hold fast a clear conscience as the rarest jewel which can adorn the bosom of a mortal. Our responsibility is to obey the Lord and to leave the consequences.

With him, that's all. They're going to face the burning, fiery furnace heated seven times. You know, how ridiculous can you get? Heating it seven times more than usual.

They're not going to change things, are they? I mean, it's practically a blast furnace when they're thrown into it. To have it seven times hotter, it's like any different. But it shows the heart of man, doesn't it? It shows the evil and the wickedness and the hatred and the enmity of the heart of man.

And I read this and I think, what would you do, MacDonald? Could you stand it? Of course, I could stand it. Even the thought of that is enough to pulverize me. But the grace thing is that God gives you the grace when you need it.

And it's just a financial grace. I don't have it tonight. You don't have it tonight.

I don't think it. Why? Because you're not going to be cast into a burning, fiery furnace. But if you needed it, he'd give it to you.

I learned that lesson the hard way. One time I was flying from Chicago down to Florida, and I was on a Delta plane, and we got over Kentucky, and the girls had just, the young ladies had just finished serving the meal, and we ran into clear air turbulence. I might have told this to some of you before.

The plane was like a feather in this atmospheric condition. At one time it fell 3,000 feet. The falling wasn't bad, but when it stopped falling and started up again, that's when you really noticed it.

And people were screaming, all these dear ladies, you know, in their finery going to Florida for a vacation. And they're screaming in the plane. And I should have been too, humanly speaking.

They told us later that if the tips of the wings didn't flex 13 feet, they would have come apart. Imagine. Imagine.

That's what it's like. You can't see it in the radars. Once you go into it, you can't turn because you never know when you're at the midpoint.

And the plane was like a feather in a gale. I promise you, I'm not exaggerating a bit. I pray that you'll never go into clear air turbulence.

And a worry wart like this, I should have been panicked. You know what I did? And I take no credit for this at all. I bowed my head.

I said, Lord, I've had a wonderful life. And it's come to the end now. My ministry's come to the end.

I just want to thank you for it. And I committed my soul to God. And that was supernatural.

I mean, that wasn't me. No human being could do that in his own strength. It was the Lord giving you grace when you need it.

As thy days so shall thy strength be. My grace is sufficient to thee. After what seemed like an eternity, and I'm not exaggerating, we came out of it.

I should tell you what they served. We had it all over us. We had Swiss steak, we had teas, we had rice all over us, and gravy.

And I want to tell you, there weren't six square inches on the floor of that plane that didn't have food on them. Talk about a mixed master. And the headrest on the seat across the aisle from me was on the floor, the headrest.

And the woman at the window, she said, Is this your dessert in my bag? And I said, No, my dessert is in the aisle. But I tell you, the Lord taught me a good lesson. He taught me, listen, when it comes time to die, I'll give you grace for that too.

That's been a help to me along the way. Don't worry about it. When you're called to go through the fire, he'll be with you in the fire.

What a wonderful Savior that we have. The furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated. I tell you, the thought, humanly speaking, of being cast into a furnace like that, it's enough to bring on cardiac arrest.

I mean, enough to die of a heart attack and not have to go. And so the free men are bound. And the men who throw them into the furnace, this was the most discriminating fire, the most discriminating fire that I've ever known.

But God is in control, and God is sovereign. God is over the affairs of men. And the king, this is beautiful, the king looks in, what does he see? I thought there were three men in there.

I see four men in there. The form of the fourth, as a son of God. And dear friends, that's the key.

The Lord Jesus is with us in all the trials of life. We get to know him in the trials of life. We should never know him in the sunshine.

We know him as we could not know through heaven's golden years, for there we shall his face behold, hear, understand his tears. He's got lessons to teach us in the darkness of the night. I want to tell you, the Lord Jesus has been in many furnaces down through the years, hasn't he? He's been in furnaces that you've been called to go through.

And you've known his presence, you've known his power in those circumstances of life, and his promise is still there, I will never leave you. I think I mentioned last night, it fits in well here, this Scott O'Grady that was recently rescued from Bosnia, and he was telling how these armed men were around all day long, all day long, and they were shooting their guns, looking for him. They said, there was someone else around with me all day long.

That's what you have here, isn't it? It's the same thing. And he doesn't leave it to your imagination to know who that was. It doesn't matter how hot the fire is, how severe the test may be in life, the Lord Jesus is with his people through it all.

Then the king summons them to come out. They're thrown in and they walk out. It's beautiful.

Every detail of the story is beautiful. And what happens, he acknowledges them as servants of the Lord. Who is the God that can rescue you? Well, he knows now.

He knows now who the God is. It's so wonderful. Their bodies hadn't been squished by fire.

Is this fiction? This isn't fiction. This is the truth of the word of God. Their hair hadn't been seized.

Imagine it. Their garments weren't burned. The only thing that was destroyed were the ropes that bound them.

That's what the fires and tribulations and testings of life do. They just burn off the things, the fetters that bind us. I love the hymn that says, when through fiery trials thy pathway shall I, my grace all-sufficient shall be thy supply, that the flame shall not hurt thee, I only design thy grass to consume and thy gold to refine.

Dear friends, God can do anything. There's nothing too hard. And young men and older men and women are being called upon still today to stand up for God in situations like this.

And then the King speaks these marvelous words. If these fellows hadn't stood for God, it wouldn't be the glory to God that there was as a result of their being true to him. He said, anybody that speaks against the God of the Jews will be cut to pieces.

The houses shall be burned down. There's no God like their God. I want to tell you, God was greatly glorified.

Why? Because these men stood for him in the face of all that. When Caesar was the emperor, every citizen was required to take a pinch of incense and go over and place it on the altar and say, Caesar is Lord. You didn't have to believe it.

You didn't have to do it again. Just once, just take a pinch of incense, go over to the altar and put it on the altar and say, Caesar is Lord. They couldn't take that pinch of it.

They said, Jesus, that's a good one to have on your bumper sticker, isn't it? Jesus is Lord. And many of them paid for that confession with their lives. Bishop Thomas Cranmer, he was an English reformer who suffered for his sake, for the Savior's sake.

And when Bloody Mary came to the throne, he saw his life's work undone and his friends killed or exiled. And perhaps in despair, he was the only Marian martyr to sign a recantation. He recanted his faith under tremendous duress, and he had no sooner done it than he realized he had made a mistake.

And he went to them and he said, my hand signed it, but even my heart wasn't in it. And he said, I take back that recantation. And they said, you'll burn at the stake.

He said, it matters not. And then on the day appointed, they took him out to burn him at the stake. They said, do you have any last requests? And he said, just untie my hand.

And they untied his hands and he went over and he held his right hand in the flame and he said, perish this unworthy hand, the hand that had signed the recantation. He wanted it to be the first part of him to burn. I tell you, it didn't all take place in the book of Daniel, did it? No, it's been taking place down through the centuries.

I think of the Christian girl and Ruskin, the poet, fell in love with her. Isn't it a test? I mean, how would you like to be married to a man as famous as Ruskin, huh? Still one of the great in English literature. And he proposed to her.

Do you know what she said? She said, do you love me more than you love Jesus Christ? And he said, I would have to say that I do. Well, she said, I couldn't marry you. I'm telling you, she had the spirit of Daniel, didn't she? Yeah, she had the spirit of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

And she was taken sick with tuberculosis. And she lay in bed and he still wanted to come and he still wanted to marry her. And he came to the house one day and they brought word to her on her sickbed that he was out there, that Ruskin was out there and she sent out word.

She said, do you still love me more than you love Jesus Christ? And he sent that word that he did. And she said, no good would come from an interview. And she died shortly afterwards.

Better to die in obedience than to live in disobedience to it. I tell you, God has his people. And I think many of them have been nerved by the incidents that we read about in these wonderful, wonderful scriptures.

A bank officer pulled one of the clerks aside one day and he said, if I gave you \$50,000, would you help me juggle the books? The young fellow said, I think I would. And the officer said, would you do it for \$1,000? The officer said, would you do it for \$1,000? The fellow said, what do you think I am, a thief? The officer said, we've already established that. We're just trying to find out your price.

He wilted under it. And I could give you many, many illustrations of this, of men, men in our day and in our acquaintance who had to make choices and who at great cost to themselves have made the choice to be true to Jesus. So a thousand voices from the world were calling to That's the lesson of this passage for us tonight.

Shall we pray? Lord, how contemporary this book is, how it speaks to us in all of life, and we all meet temptations to cut corners, to do under the table things, to say things that shouldn't be said. Oh, we pray that we might be encouraged by the example of these men, that we might be true to you, that we might be men and women of integrity. We might stand for the truth of God, no matter what the cost might be in a society that's turning against you more violently all the time.

Help us not to compromise. Help us not to go with the flow, we pray. Help us to stand as witnesses to yourself and to your precious holy word.

We ask in the Savior's name. Amen.

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