



The Good News

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Braving the Fire

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Have you ever said anything, either defending the truth or attacking with the truth, which you knew would generate an angry or ridiculing response? Perhaps a better question to ask is have you ever NOT said anything to defend or attack with the truth, knowing it would evoke a response? As Christians, we face dozens of these choices every day. Granted, sometimes we have to pick and choose our battles, but there are times when a convicted Christian cannot simply ignore or avoid saying something regarding the truth of God's word. In the back of our minds, we may know that speaking up could only end in one of three ways: a) Everyone is angry and jumps on our back about "hate speech"; b) Everyone makes fun of us for being such a "holy roller" or "Bible thumper", perhaps calling us "old fashioned"; c) Everyone decides to quit talking around us and they go elsewhere to continue their conversation, effectively ignoring what we said. However, there is a fourth possibility, albeit a small one: Everyone (or maybe just one) listens to what we have to say and is interested in hearing more about what the Bible says. Amid the dozens of decisions we make every day when it comes to speaking up or not speaking up, this fourth possibility must always be in our minds. Sure, whomever we speak to may be angry, they may make fun of us, they may ignore us, but there is always the possibility that it could bring about an opportunity to teach. That opportunity could occur right then in the context of the discussion, or it may happen weeks or months later after the person(s) have had a chance to think about it. Regardless, they will know where you stand, and even though people may disagree with our stand on what the Bible says, most people tend to respect someone who stands by their convictions.

Recall to your mind an incident involving a king, an idol, a fire, and three convicted men. In **Daniel 3** we find that Nebuchadnezzar created an "image of gold" and commanded that all the people of the

kingdom were to pay homage to the idol every time the trumpet blew. It was brought to the king's attention that (at least) three men were not obeying his command: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. In **Dan. 3:14**, the king confronts these three regarding their disobedience and threatens to throw them in the fiery furnace. In **Dan. 3:16** they reply, "*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.*" These three men were faced with a decision, much like we face every day; the difference is that this decision was a matter of life or death, obedience to God vs. obedience to the king. Because of their conviction, they made the decision to stand up against the king's decree. The king threw them in the furnace, and God (the real One) chose to save the three men. The point to bring out here is that it made no difference to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego if God chose to save them or not. They knew He could, but even if He did not, it was not going to change their convictions.

The next time we are faced with a decision of whether to speak up about something that is addressed in God's word, consider three men who looked an angry king, a golden image, and a fiery furnace right in the face and stood by their convictions. One day our lives may be threatened because of our convictions...we must prepare for that day now, enduring the feeble ridicules and outbursts of anger, realizing that we have a God who will justify us before all on that Great Day.