



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

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Daniel 3:6 "But whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire."

Our verse comes from the amazing account of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, the Babylonian names given to the young Jewish men. Far from home, in a land and culture so different from what they were accustomed to, these three learned some fast lessons. These could be college students away in a university. They could be a young couple who have moved states away to begin their careers and family.

Here are three lessons that they quickly learned:

First, not everyone is nice. They were not in Babylon on a field trip. They were taken against their will. Captives. Given Babylonian names that disgraced Jehovah, forced to eat food that they wouldn't eat and now to bow to an idol. Our verse shows the decree of Nebuchadnezzar, the king. Disobey and you will die.

Not all teachers are nice. Not all people in position of authority are nice. Not all bosses are nice. Not all neighbors are nice. Not only that, there are those who want you to join them in doing things that are not nice. Evil loves company.

This reminds us that we need to be careful who we call friend. We need to be careful about who and what we share our life with. Not everyone needs to know the details of your life. Not everyone can keep secrets secret. We need to be careful who we date and who we marry. You need someone who will help you journey to the Lord. Someone that you can talk with spiritually and personally.

Second, not everything makes sense. Bowing to an idol made of metal and created and fashioned by man doesn't make sense. It's lifeless. It cannot move. It cannot hear. It cannot speak. Why praise something lifeless? It doesn't make sense.

There are things that some say that makes no sense. We try to understand and be reasonable, but what they say just doesn't add up. It makes no sense. Evolution is like that. It doesn't make sense. How does life come from non-life? And, if that can happen, why doesn't it continue to happen? It makes no sense.

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Sin doesn't make sense. A moment of fun for the price of your spiritual wellness, freedom and future? That doesn't make sense.

Third, not every choice is easy. It wasn't for these three Jewish boys. The right choice came with grave consequences. There are times when we must listen to our head and not our hearts. Our hearts get tangled up emotionally and can we can walk blindly into something that causes heartache and trouble. There comes a time when you may have to leave a situation, walk out of a movie, tell your date 'take me home.' Those are stressful moments, but they are driven by conviction and faith.

And for Shadrach and his two friends, Satan would have them believe that there was no other way. They had to bow down. Satan would have them believe that all these other people could not be wrong. Everyone was bowing but them. Could all those others be wrong? Satan would have them believe that since they are a long way from home, no one would know. Just bow one time.

It is hard to stand when everyone around you is bowing. It's hard to stand when the safest thing is to bow. These three had deep spiritual conviction. And, conviction sees the principle above the person. Conviction sees the principle above the situation. Conviction will show you options when you do not think there are any.

A stat revealed that 65% of high school grads will lose their faith by the time they finish college. How did these three Jewish captives have the faith to do what was right? They believed from their hearts. They learned what was right and it became part of their spiritual DNA.

Lessons learned. We need to learn them and then teach others.

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