Series: Standing Firm in Love

Series Text: 1st Corinthians 16:13-14

February 17, 2019

Message 3:

**Living a Stand-Up Life in a Bow-Down World**

Daniel 3

1st Corinthians 16:13-14 - Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong. And do everything with love.

**Intro:** Even with all the opposition we seem to face in our culture, it is not hard to be a Christian in America compared to other places.

There may come a time, when we really have to make a choice - am I going to continue to identify myself publicly as a Christian no matter how hard, or even how fatal to me or my family, the opposition might get?

Do you find yourselves at times a little nervous about being too open with your Christianity? I’m not talking about preaching hard to everyone all the time everywhere you are going.

Paul said to be all things to all people - could be paraphrased - stay normal! You can live a godly life, and still seem normal -

But, I’m talking about being so nervous about how some people might perceive your faith and Christianity that at times you are a little embarrassed about it - you want to hide it - you might not be received the same way at work - when you have to go on a business trip and everyone else is participating after hours in things that make you uncomfortable - and it makes you uncomfortable to say your uncomfortable -

Or at school - are you not going to be able to be the friend of the cool person - in the cool crowd - because you are a Christian who takes your faith seriously? Not weird - but seriously.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer - a German scholar - during WWII he was in America - could have stayed and been safe - went back to minister to his people knowing it could cost him his life -

Some Christians in Germany wanted to ignore the trains taking Jewish people to the death camps - the trains would go by their churches and they would sing louder so they couldn’t hear the trains -

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, “We can’t do this.” He actually became part of a German spy ring - He was a pastor - seminary teacher - and double agent! Eventually his faith was found out - he was hung right before the war ended …

Could there come a time when our faith is tested this way?

Daniel 3:1-7 NIV - King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, sixty cubits high and six cubits wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. He then summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up. So the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before it.

 Then the herald loudly proclaimed, “Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do: As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.”

 Therefore, as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp and all kinds of music, all the nations and peoples of every language fell down and worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Notice the emphasis on images and sounds -

Do we have images and sounds today that can pull us from God, or take us away from God?

Do we have images and sounds in our culture that we just accept - when maybe we shouldn’t have those images and sounds in our lives?

They were COMMANDED to bow down to this image when they heard the sound -

**Culture will bring us to a place where we feel commanded to do something we know we shouldn’t do.**

Daniel 3:12 -But there are some Jews—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—whom you have put in charge of the province of Babylon. They pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They refuse to serve your gods and do not worship the gold statue you have set up.

We are all bowing to something - it’s very important that we bow to the right thing!

Bob Dylan - Gotta Serve Somebody!

I think it’s easy for us to not be as careful about this as we should be! Culture creeps into our lives and things become acceptable that shouldn’t become acceptable for us!

Daniel 3:13-14 - Then Nebuchadnezzar flew into a rage and ordered that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought before him. When they were brought in, Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you refuse to serve my gods or to worship the gold statue I have set up?”

We even have a term today - the Culture War - we call it a war because people start to furiously hate people who disagree with them on certain subjects.

Daniel 3:15 - I will give you one more chance to bow down and worship the statue I have made when you hear the sound of the musical instruments. But if you refuse, you will be thrown immediately into the blazing furnace. And then what god will be able to rescue you from my power?”

**Big Idea: How do we live a stand-up life in a bow-down world?**

What are we going to do when we are pressured to do something - and the pressure gets strong - we know we won’t be accepted by that person - that group - the boss may even find a “legitimate” excuse to fire you if you refuse to do what they want you to do - what are you going to do?

**> Standing firm takes courage.**

Courage - from the French word “cour” - heart -

What is in your heart?

Courage is not the absence of fear - courage is not giving in in the face of fear.

Daniel 3:16 - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you.”

We always think we need to defend ourselves - we always think we need to fight back - say something - respond to that post.

“We do not need to defend ourselves!” Sometimes we need to let whatever is going to happen - happen - and trust God -

Sometimes it takes courage to do nothing - don’t respond - don’t give in - don’t participate - just stand.

**Courage isn’t the absence of fear.**

 **Courage is standing firm in spite of my fear.**

When we make this decision, the power of the Holy Spirit comes to be with us and strengthen us.

**> Standing firm takes faith.**

Faith to believe and know that you are not standing alone - that God is standing with you.

Daniel 3:17-18 - If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. But even if he doesn’t, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up.

This is faith - We believe God will - but even if He doesn’t - we won’t serve anyone or anything else!

When you are a follower of Christ, you are always in a win-win situation!

2nd Timothy 4:18 - Yes, and the Lord will deliver me from every evil attack and will bring me safely into his heavenly Kingdom. All glory to God forever and ever! Amen.

Which is it? Rescue or getting thrown in the fire? Both! Either way - we win!

Philippians 1:21 - For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better.

They were still calling the King - “Your Majesty” - they still showed him appropriate respect -

Their stand FOR God and His purpose was greater than their stand AGAINST the King!

That’s an example to us! Some people see us as being against everything - especially if it seems fun!

Let’s let our stand for God - our love for God - the love and joy of the Lord that is supposed to be ours because of our relationship with Him - why can’t that be stronger than us appearing angry and against everything all the time?

**If we don’t stand for something, we’ll fall for anything.**

We don’t do what we do - and avoid what we avoid - because we hate people - God help us if we come across as being against people - we are not against people … flesh and blood … the battle we face is spiritual.

We must love all people - but stand for God! It’s more about Who we are for than what we are against! And it is standing FOR God that will keep us from falling - not standing against things that keep us from falling!

Daniel 3:19-25 - Nebuchadnezzar was so furious with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that his face became distorted with rage. He commanded that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual. Then he ordered some of the strongest men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. So they tied them up and threw them into the furnace, fully dressed in their pants, turbans, robes, and other garments. And because the king, in his anger, had demanded such a hot fire in the furnace, the flames killed the soldiers as they threw the three men in. So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, securely tied, fell into the roaring flames.

 But suddenly, Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in amazement and exclaimed to his advisers, “Didn’t we tie up three men and throw them into the furnace?”

 “Yes, Your Majesty, we certainly did,” they replied.

 “Look!” Nebuchadnezzar shouted. “I see four men, unbound, walking around in the fire unharmed! And the fourth looks like a god!”

It wasn’t just a god - it was the God! Jesus Christ Himself was present with them in their hardest moment!

You have to believe that when you stand for God - Jesus will be with you in your hardest moment! Stand for Him - don’t bow to the cultural pressure - and Jesus will be with you!

Daniel 3:26-27 - Then Nebuchadnezzar came as close as he could to the door of the flaming furnace and shouted: “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!”

 So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stepped out of the fire. Then the high officers, officials, governors, and advisers crowded around them and saw that the fire had not touched them. Not a hair on their heads was singed, and their clothing was not scorched. They didn’t even smell of smoke!

Nebuchadnezzar now realizes that their God is bigger than his image … 90 feet by 9 feet -

We can move through this culture without taking the smell of the culture on us!

**> Standing firm inspires others.**

You think people will hate you - mock you - be against you - that may happen - but there are those who will be so amazed at your courage that they will be impressed - and they will understand that your God and your commitment to Him is greater than the things they are committed to - and more important than what they are going after in this life.

Daniel 3:28-30 - Then Nebuchadnezzar said, “Praise to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent his angel to rescue his servants who trusted in him. They defied the king’s command and were willing to die rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. Therefore, I make this decree: If any people, whatever their race or nation or language, speak a word against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they will be torn limb from limb, and their houses will be turned into heaps of rubble. There is no other god who can rescue like this!”

 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to even higher positions in the province of Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar was impressed - but he still needed some work - he didn’t have the love - (next week) -

Sometimes we can be like that - God help us - that’s not impressive!

But he was impressed with their stand!

You want to impress people? Stand firm - in love - and you will stand out!

This is the kind of church our culture needs today - this is the kind of church our city needs today.

I can’t answer for every church … I don’t know what’s going on in every church … but I can tell you this - Kokomo - Howard County - our surrounding area - needs a church that will stand strong - not compromise - not be afraid to talk about some stuff - and yet still love everyone in our area with the passion of Jesus Christ -

This is what our **Small Groups** are all about … loving each other well … welcoming all who come …

This is what our **Next Steps** is all about … helping people find their gifts and purpose in life so that they can do what God has called them to do - standing firm and loving others well as they do that.

Do you know what God has called you to do? Do you know what your gifts are? Are you not just fighting against the culture, or trying to survive the culture - but are you making a difference?

We can make a greater difference together than we can alone - NEXT STEPS!

\*\* Remember - **It is more powerful to stand for something than it is to stand against something.**

We have a mission from God to impact the Next Generation - by Empowering All Generations to Reach the Next Generation -

A rising tide lifts all boats. When one generation is blessed and changed all generations will be blessed and changed!

Don’t stand against something cultural that isn’t that important - We don’t like this, we don’t like that - — ignore the things that aren’t addressed in the Bible -

We want to impact our Next Generation by giving them something to stand for - not just something to stand against - because that’s not enough -

Missions Trip - Not just for students - Every Generation - together - we are on this journey together - all of us - no matter what our cultural preferences based on our generation.

Three ways we should take a stand:

1. **Stand in prayer.**

Prayer in the Bible is not passive.

Ephesians 6:11 - Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil.

Ephesians 6:13 -14 - Therefore, put on every piece of God’s armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground…

Ephesians 6:18 - Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion…

If you want to stand firm in this culture, your prayer life needs to be more active than passive - sometimes more loud than a quiet time - get a place and time where you can get into talking to God - seriously and without shyness -

If we’re going to stand in the culture - we’ve got to stand strong in prayer!

There are times to be quiet and listen - and there are times to do some warfare prayer!

**2. Stand for our purpose.**

Our spiritual enemy will try to get you to not find out and live God’s purpose.

For some, it’s the only reason you haven’t joined a team yet - you have let the enemy talk you out of it -

* Not worthy - join the crowd -
* I’ve had a bad week - join the crowd … month … year …
* I’m too busy - too busy to find out and do what God wants you to do?

1st Corinthians 15:58 NIV - Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

I’ve wanted to quit - sometimes the only thing that keeps us from quitting - is to keep going!

**3. Stand for God.**

If you do nothing else - stand for God.

He stood for you - He put everything on the line.

“He made Himself of no reputation” - for you.

He went to the cross for the joy that was on the other side - that’s you.

He didn’t want to go to the cross … but He did it for you!

We should be thankful that Jesus came for us … and stand for Him - in love - with a smile … but always acknowledging Him -

He says if we acknowledge Him, He will acknowledge us before the Father … but the opposite -

Matthew 10:32 MSG - Stand up for me against world opinion and I’ll stand up for you before my Father in heaven.

Throughout the NT, Jesus is always seated -

Colossians 3:1 - … Christ sits in the place of honor at God’s right hand.

But one time - He stands - Stephen … first martyr …

As they were stoning him -

Acts 7:55-56 - But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed steadily into heaven and saw the glory of God, and he saw Jesus standing in the place of honor at God’s right hand. And he told them, “Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing in the place of honor at God’s right hand!”

**When we stand FOR Jesus, He will stand WITH us.**