

### 3. Counting the Cost

#### Passage – Daniel 3:1-30

First talk - Daring to be different

Second talk - Engaging with society

But now we want to return to the issue of facing the cost

Recall the two temptations Daniel and his friends face

1. To blend in – to become of the world – compromise
2. To escape – to move out of the world – disengagement

The first challenge they faced in chapter one was to eat the King's rich food – something they felt that as believers they could not do – they felt for some reason it would be dishonouring to God.

?Kosher ?sacrificed to idols? Bad for them? – Not clear from the text

This first challenge was one in which they risked embarrassment – but not much else.

But it was also the first of many steps that would take them eventually to the fiery furnace (chapter 3) and the lions' den (chapter 6).

In the same way there are steps of faithfulness to God for us that might make us unpopular with others or risk embarrassment – where we need to take a different path from those round us in terms of lifestyle.

Refusing to follow lifestyle choices - The misuse alcohol or drugs, sexual boundaries, gambling, the way we use our money, honesty, language... refusing to join in with gossip, capitulate to cynicism, running others down, complaining.

It's noteworthy that Paul's exhortation to 'shine like stars' in Philippians 2:14-15 is in the context of doing 'everything without grumbling or arguing' so that 'you may become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation."'

And then there are steps of faithfulness where the stakes are considerably raised – where not just reputation or friendship is at stake – but something much more – our jobs, our property, our freedom, even our lives.

Two very familiar stories!

Tell story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and the fiery furnace

An image of gold (1-5)

A fiery threat (6-15)

A godly defiance. 'But if not...' (16-18)

A fourth companion (19-25)

An extraordinary vindication (26-30)

Tell story of Daniel in the Lion's Den

- A jealous conspiracy (1-9)
- A foolish law enacted (10-16)
- An anxious night (17-20)
- Saved from the lions (21-23)
- Further vindication and praise (24-28)

It's interesting that the situations S, M and A face in chapter 3 with the fiery furnace – and Daniel faced in chapter 6 with the lions' den – both involved changes in the law.

It was the change in the law that took God's people from a place of safety to a place of peril

In chapter 3 – the story of the fiery furnace - the law changes in a way that forces these believers to do something that they believe is wrong – in this case to bow down to an idolatrous image.

In the Western world today there are changes in the law threatening to do just that – to force us to act against our consciences – especially with regard to areas of life ethics – abortion is an obvious example – Christians risk being effectively marginalised from some specialities in medicine.

If the law were to change to allow euthanasia or assisted suicide – making it part of 'the full range of services' we are obliged to supply in – say – intensive care, anaesthetics, rehab medicine, paediatrics or care of the elderly – there would be pressure to conform of a very different kind.

But this is the very environment that some of you may practise in.

In chapter 6 – Daniel and the lion's den - the law changes in a way that threatens to stop these men participating in what is really quite normal behaviour for believers – for Daniel it was to pray with his window open toward Jerusalem, his normal practice for over 60 years.

In the same way for us it might be praying in public or for patients, sharing our faith, expressing an opinion about an ethical issue, perhaps even wearing a cross.

The apostle Paul is quite unambiguous in telling the Romans to 'submit...to the governing authorities' (Romans 13:1). The context of a Roman empire at that time hostile to Christians makes his argument that governments have been established by God even more compelling. But this is not a call for unquestioning obedience.

The Bible is very clear about 'red lines': that we should not submit to obeying governing authorities when (first) they force us to do things which are wrong, or (second) try to prevent us from living and speaking in obedience to Jesus Christ.

The Israelite midwives refused to kill Israelite babies when the king of Egypt ordered them to do so (Exodus 1:15-21).

Rahab the Harlot (Joshua 2) refused to hand over the Israelite spies to the King of Jericho.

Peter said 'We must obey God rather than men!' to the high priest and Sanhedrin when he was ordered not to preach the gospel (Acts 5:29).

The response of S, M and A is particularly striking.

Daniel 3:16-18 - "King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

'But even if he does not' – the KJV and ESV put it even more starkly 'But if not'

In the summer of 1940, more than 350,000 soldiers—most of them British—were trapped at Dunkirk. The German forces were on their way, and they had the capacity to wipe out the British Expeditionary Force. When it seemed certain that the allied forces at Dunkirk were about to be massacred, a British naval officer cabled just three words back to London: "But if not."

"*But if not.*" These words were instantly recognizable to the people who were accustomed to hearing the scriptures read in church. They knew the story told in the book of Daniel. The message in those three little words was clear: The situation was desperate. The allied forces were trapped. It would take a miracle to save them, but they were determined not to give in. One simple three word phrase communicated all that.

For some reason - people are still not sure why - the Axis powers hesitated. They backed off, briefly, and what's known as the Miracle of Dunkirk took place. British families and fishermen heard about the cry for help, and they answered with merchant marine boats, with pleasure cruisers, and even with small fishing boats. By a miracle, they evacuated more than 338,000 soldiers and took them to safety.

Now of course S, M and A did not know whether or not God would intervene with a miracle – as he actually did – but regardless they were not going to bow down to the image. It is noteworthy that amongst the heroes of faith listed in Hebrews 11, some God rescued and some he didn't. But he was equally glorified in the testimony of both.

In the same way we too need to count the cost of obedience and be prepared to pay it.

That obedience might cost us our reputations, jobs, possessions, money, freedom... perhaps even our lives.

Tell story of Richard Wurmbbrand whose wife did not wish to be married to a coward.

### **Our context**

Two different world views – Christian and secular

Christian worldview

Where did I come from?

- *created by God for relationship*

How did I get here?

- *fallen from grace (flawed masterpieces)*

How are we going to sort things out?

- *science, technology and God's wisdom/redemption*

What does the future hold?

- *the hope of resurrection into a perfect world*

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Secular worldview

Where did we come from?

- *the product of matter, chance and time*

How did we get where we are?

- *the undirected process of evolution*

How are we going to sort things out?

- *Science and technology*

What can we hope for?

- *Immortality through science and technology*

Secular fundamentalism

Atheist/materialist worldview

- human beings are clever monkeys
- death is the end
- God (and therefore revelation) does not exist

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Secular humanist ethics

- Abortion on demand, euthanasia
- Embryo research, selection and disposal
- Same sex marriage, sex outside marriage

Mountains of culture

Clearing the ground

‘Christians in the UK face problems in living out their faith and these problems have been mostly caused and exacerbated by social, cultural and legal changes over the past decade.’

Specific pressure points for medics

Abortion

Embryo research /Some infertility treatments

Emergency contraception /contraception

Same sex adoption/Transgender procedures

(Assisted Suicide)

Secular humanist laws

The Abortion Act and Easy divorce (1960s)

The HFE Act (1990 and 2008)

The Civil Partnership Act (2004)

The Equality Act (2010)

The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill (2013)

Four Assisted Suicide Bills (2014-2015)

Problematic guidelines

Employment Equality regulations (2003)  
Equality Acts 2006 and 2010  
The Abortion Act 1967  
Mental Capacity Act 2005  
Religion or belief regulations (DoH, 2009)  
Sexual orientation regulations (DoH, 2009)  
Personal beliefs and medical practice (GMC, 2013)  
The law and ethics of abortion (BMA, 2014)

#### Pressure points for other Christians

Marriage celebrants  
Adoption agencies  
Bed and breakfast owners  
Relationship counsellors  
Florists, photographers, bakers

#### Personal pressure points

Don't let any Christians near this baby'  
'Extra duties'  
Protecting a senior colleague  
'I'm putting my daughter on the pill'  
The MAP in A & E  
A letter to a 15 year old and a postcard

#### Levels of coercion

Concession - Accept me - an acceptable variant of normal  
Expectation - Affirm me - a right moral choice  
Celebrate me - a good and courageous choice  
Requirement - Assist me – you have a duty to help  
Or else... (reputation, job, money, freedom... life)

#### This is God's world

God owns the world and everyone in it (Psalm 24:1)  
He sets up kings and deposes them (Daniel 4:25, 32; 5:21)  
He hold all rulers accountable (Psalm 2 & 82)  
We should pray for them and be subject to them (1 Timothy 2:1,2; Titus 3:1,2)  
But if they force us to disobey God we say 'No'

#### Romans 13

Be subject to the governing authorities  
Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13,14  
Being a good citizen  
Following orders?  
But what if?

#### Christ's call

Christians are 'not of the world' (John 17:14) but are 'sent into the world' (John 17:18)  
Called to be both salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16)  
Living in Babylon (Jeremiah 29:4-7; 1 Peter 2:11,12; 5:13)  
Coming out of Babylon (Revelation 18:2-4)

## Living in Babylon

<sup>4</sup>This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: <sup>5</sup>'Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce... Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.' (Jeremiah 29:4-7)

## Serving God in government

Joseph  
Daniel  
Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego  
Esther and Mordecai  
Nehemiah

## Autocracy vs Democracy

In an autocracy we may have little influence apart from prayer  
But in a democracy we all have opportunity to shape public policy  
And in a real sense all of us are also 'rulers' because we vote  
So we must do what we can to ensure that the laws on the statute books are just and fair

## God's concern for justice

Amos 5:7-15 – Hate evil, love God and establish justice in the gate  
Isaiah 1:15-17; 58:6-10 – Seek justice, correct oppression, bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause  
Micah 6:8 – Do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with your God  
Zechariah 7:9-10 – Render true judgements, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner and the poor  
Proverbs 31:8,9 – Speak out for those who have no voice, defend the rights of the poor and needy

## God's view of law

'Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people' (Isaiah 10:1,2)

## Social Action

Isaiah 61, the Jubilee Year and Bono

*'not charity but justice'*

Dom Camara

*'When I served the poor they said I was a saint, when I asked why they were poor they said I was a communist'*

## Public Policy Strategy

Producing resources  
Undertaking research  
Networking with like-minded organisations  
Attending and organising strategic policy meetings  
Presenting talks  
Responding to public consultations  
Speaking on the media  
Meeting with parliamentarians and decision-makers

### Key strategy areas

**Euthanasia/assisted suicide** – Combatting bills, intervening in court cases, promoting care  
**Abortion** – Working with allies to ensure existing law is upheld and to seek law reform through media, courts and parliament.  
**Conscience and Civil liberties** – Working to ensure conscience rights of Christian health professionals are upheld  
**Organ donation** – Opposing the introduction of presumed consent  
**Mitochondrial/embryo research** – Opposing further liberalisation of the law  
**Sex and relationships** – Opposing values-free sex education and pornography  
**Same sex marriage** – Lessening impact of implementation of Marriage (SSC) Act  
**Drugs** – Combatting decriminalisation and promoting effective prevention and treatment

Idolatry is the key problem

Essence of idolatry is that it leads to disobedience and loss of devotion to God

Idols tempt us to disobey God either to

to give us something we want to have  
to avoid loss of something we want to keep

Temptation is to believe that the only way we can get what we want or avoid what we fear is by disobeying God

What are the key idols in medicine?

#### 1. Popularity

Reputation is a good thing but it can become an idol if we are prepared to disobey God to preserve or win it

#### 2. People

Family and Parents – CT Studd – look on mother's face when he left  
Wives/husbands  
Children  
Girlfriends and boyfriends

#### 3. Possessions

Weeds and thorns  
Musical instruments

Land

#### 4. Profession itself

Nebo – God of learning

Nehushtan – Numbers 21:4-9; 2 Kings 18:4

Subtlety of medicine because so interesting and so good

Study has its limits – Ecclesiastes 12:10

#### **Summary**

The Fiery Furnace

The Lions' den

Conscientious objection

Idolatry

Idols in medicine