**Abundant Life Church**

**Sunday, August 2nd, 2020**

**Title: A People of Courage**

**Text:**

*Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.***1 Corinthians 16:13 (NASB)**

16  Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter.
17  "If it be *so,* our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king.
18  "But *even* if *He does* not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."
**Daniel 3:16-18 (NASB)**

24  Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up in haste; he said to his high officials, "Was it not three men we cast bound into the midst of the fire?" They replied to the king, "Certainly, O king."
25  He said, "Look! I see four men loosed *and* walking *about* in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of *the* gods!"
**Daniel 3:24-25 (NASB)**

What they accomplished by standing.

1. **Their obedience and faith gave a testimony to the reality of God in real objective terms.** If was not contingent upon someone’s vision or emotions or mythology.

The Babylonian culture had many, many gods…

**List of some of the more important Babylonian gods**

**Anu**: the god of the highest heaven
**Marduk**: national god of the Babylonians
**Tiamat**: dragon goddess
**Kingu**: husband of Tiamat
**Enlil**: god of weather and storms
**Nabu**: god of the scribal arts
**Ishtar**: goddess of love
**Ea**: god of wisdom
**Enurta**: god of war
**Anshar**: father of heaven
**Shamash**: god of the sun and of justice
**Ashur**: national god of the Assyrians
**Kishar**: father of earth

We know these gods are made up, based up myths that had been handed down and based upon the way that ancient man looked at the world.

By refusing to bow and worship this latest false god, this was a testament to a people who believed something that was worth living for and dying for. The amazing rescue from the fire was the real God providing an objective testimony that the creator God of all Gods was indeed real and over the myriad of Babylonian gods.

In the New Testament, the testimony that God has given is the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

30  "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent,
31  because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."
**Acts 17:30-31 (NASB)**

*1. Jesus himself testified to his coming resurrection from the dead.*

 “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again” ([Mark 8:31](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark%208.31); see also [Matthew 17:22](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2017.22); [Luke 9:22](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%209.22)). Those who consider the resurrection of Christ unbelievable will probably say that Jesus was deluded or (more likely) that the early church put these statements in his mouth to make him teach the falsehood that they themselves conceived. But those who read the Gospels and come to the considered conviction that the one who speaks so compellingly through these witnesses is not the figment of foolish imagination will be unsatisfied with this effort to explain away Jesus’s own testimony to his resurrection from the dead.

*2. The tomb was empty on Easter.*

The earliest documents claim this: “When they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus” ([Luke 24:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%2024.3)). And the enemies of Jesus confirmed it by claiming that the disciples had stolen the body ([Matthew 28:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2028.13)). The dead body of Jesus could not be found. There are four possible ways to account for this.

1. His foes stole the body.
2. His friends stole the body.
3. Jesus was not dead, but only unconscious when they laid him in the tomb.
4. God raised Jesus from the dead.

3. *The disciples were almost immediately transformed from men who were hopeless and fearful after the crucifixion (Luke 24:21, John 20:19) into men who were confident and bold witnesses of the resurrection (Acts 2:24, 3:15, 4:2).*

*4. Paul claimed that, not only had he seen the risen Christ, but that five hundred others had seen him also, and many were still alive when he made this public claim.*

*5. The sheer existence of a thriving, empire-conquering early Christian church supports the truth of the resurrection claim.*

*6. The apostle Paul’s conversion supports the truth of the resurrection.*

*7. The New Testament witnesses do not bear the stamp of dupes or deceivers.*

*- from John Piper*

The resurrection of Jesus is not based upon any person’s vision, not a message from an angel, nor simply believing something because it was handed down from past generations. It is an objective truth, rooted in historical fact. It takes no faith to believe that there was a man named Jesus, who lived died and rose again from the grave.

It takes faith to surrender to Him and live for Him.

When Christians bow to the foolishness of this world you deny the culture the opportunity of hearing the testimony that what we believe is rooted in historical and intellectual truth.

1. **THEY LIVED FREE!**

Their nation was not free, in fact is was a defeated power, but individually they lived free. You do not get to chose what you go through in life, but you do get to chose how you go through it. They were either going to live free or die free, but either way they would never give away the God-ordained right to the tide of this world.

***Daniel Richardson’s*** *work (2010) on conformity follows a tradition in experimental psychology that goes back more than six decades. In the 1950s, the Harvard psychologist*[***Solomon Asch***](http://psychology.about.com/od/classicpsychologystudies/p/conformity.htm)*demonstrated that people frequently adopt the view of the majority even when it is obviously wrong, and even when they have to deny their own senses. In the same decade,*[***Read Tuddenham***](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-6494.1959.tb01834.x/abstract)*at the University of California found that his students would give ridiculous answers to simple questions – stating, for example, that male babies have a life expectancy of 25 years – when they thought others had answered in the same way.*

Three different psychological studies show there is a tremendous human desire to conform the group around me which demonstrates why people get more stupid in a crowd.

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20160113-are-your-opinions-really-your-own>

Your freedom of worship is not granted to you by the crowd, nor the power of the state. It is a gift from God to you.

In our culture right now the right to free speech, think independently, and the truth about God is under attack. If we don’t stand for Christ now, we may lose the opportunity soon.

People frequently adopt the view of the majority even when it is obviously wrong

When people interact, they end up agreeing, and they make worse decisions - they don’t share information, they share biases

1. **When we stand for truth, we give God something to work with!**

Our lives exist for His glory. Those who bow to the world deny God the ability to use our lives for His glory. Those who stand gain a testimony through either, deliverance from the flames or faithfulness through the flames.

These men give us then a full-balanced picture of faith: faith knows the power of God (he *is able*, 17), guards the freedom of God (*but if not* …, 18a), and holds the truth of God (*we will not serve your gods*, 18b). There are some in our day, however, who would not be entirely happy with this ‘faith’. In their view, faith involves being far more cocksure about God’s ways. Their kind of ‘faith’ is allergic to any uncertainty about details. If they could re-write the chapter, they would have the friends declare: ‘Nebuchadnezzar, we are going to *call down* God’s deliverance; we, O king, are going to *bind* the fire.’ But Bible faith doesn’t do that. Faith does not predict God’s ways; it simply holds to God’s word (in this case, Exod. 20:3); faith obeys God’s truth, it does not manipulate God’s hand; faith is not required to plot God’s course but only to obey God’s command. Faith’s finest hour may be when it can oppose Nebuchadnezzar’s three words (burning fiery furnace) with three of its own: ‘*But if not*.’[[1]](#footnote-1)

Christ did not keep them out of the furnace but found them in it. He does not always shield you from all distresses and dangers, but it is in the loneliness, in the betrayal, in the loss that the Fourth Man comes and walks with you. He has the knack of both exposing you to, yet keeping you through, waters and rivers and fire (cf. Isa. 43:2–3)—and operating rooms and funeral parlours and an empty house. The Fourth Man can always find his people.[[2]](#footnote-2)

1. Dale Ralph Davis, [*The Message of Daniel: His Kingdom Cannot Fail*](https://ref.ly/logosres/bst27da?ref=Bible.Da3.16-18&off=3072&ctx=r+forget+this+(18).%0a~These+men+give+us+th), ed. Alec Motyer and Derek Tidball, The Bible Speaks Today (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2013), 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Dale Ralph Davis, [*The Message of Daniel: His Kingdom Cannot Fail*](https://ref.ly/logosres/bst27da?ref=Bible.Da3.19-30&off=1744&ctx=ely+comforted+here.+~Christ+did+not+keep+), ed. Alec Motyer and Derek Tidball, The Bible Speaks Today (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2013), 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)