

# Take a Stand for God

by William MacDonald

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*William MacDonald emphasizes the importance of total commitment to God through the example of biblical sacrifices and personal dedication.*

**Duration:** 55:31

**Scripture:** Daniel 3:16

**Topics:** "Faithfulness To God", "Standing Firm"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of unwavering commitment and dedication to God, showcasing the stories of various biblical characters like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Ruth, Esther, Caleb, Jonathan, Uriah, and others who displayed remarkable faithfulness and loyalty to God despite facing challenges and temptations. It highlights the significance of standing firm in one's beliefs, even in the face of adversity, and the blessings that come from wholehearted devotion to the Lord.

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## Transcript

I'd like to make a brief announcement. How many here get the Berean Call in the mail every month? I just want to thank you very much. That's great.

I just want to recommend that those who don't get it might consider writing in for it. I know you can't see the address here on the board, but you can come up afterwards and get it. It's the Berean Call, Post Office Box 7019, Bend, Oregon, 97708.

If you really want to know what's going on in the evangelical world today and how to answer some of the goofy, weird things that are going on, it's a good paper. It's sent to you free. It's just a folder, really, four, six pages, maybe, every month.

And I thank God for Dave Hunt. He's one of the modern day prophets. Sometimes when I mention his name, they say, he's divisive.

I say, well, Isaiah was divisive. Jeremiah was divisive. Jesus was divisive.

There was a division of the people because of him. It says that in the scripture. Anybody who's going to be true to the word of God will be accused of being divisive.

But Dave really stands for the truth of the word of God. If you can send a little to help with postage, it's not required. But of course, it's always appreciated.

You know the saying, there's nothing like a little greenery to brighten up the scenery. And that would be very appropriate. I'm really glad that Brother Harold gave out that Hymn 37, Amazing Love, because it encapsulates what we talked about the first part of this conference.

That expression, amazing love, how can it be that thou, my God, shouldst die for me? And we spent considerable time emphasizing the fact that the one who died on Calvary's cross is the one who designed the joints of your hand, the one who gives you the breath that you're breathing right now, who sustains your life. The one who died for you on that cross of wood is the incarnate God. And I want to tell you, if that truth will really grip us, we'll never be the same again.

We'll never be the same again. We talked about who he is. We talked about what he did for us.

We talked about the people for whom he did it. And we were rather shocked at the X-ray of ourselves, I think. And then we talked about the marvelous blessings that have flowed to us as a result of that.

And we realized, I think, when we came to an end of all of that, that this requires a response from us. And of course, the response it requires is, if the Lord Jesus did that for me, I belong to him. I'm his to do whatever he wants to do with me.

And we quoted that verse, I have seen the vision and for self I cannot live. Life is worse than worthless unless all I give. And I'd like to emphasize again to you that really in the light of Calvary, what the Savior did for us, it's nothing short of blasphemy to hold back anything from him.

The response required is total commitment. And then we said that this is a thread that goes all through the Bible. And this morning, I hope that our hearts were subdued when we thought of one of the greatest illustrations of commitment in the word of God, where that dear man Abraham went up to the rich Mariah to offer his son as a sacrifice to God, as a burnt offering to God.

This is incredible, isn't it? Just incredible when you stop to think of it. He really loved God, didn't he? He really was devoted to God. He was really consecrated to God when he would be willing to take the darling in his heart, the thing he prized more than anything else in all the world, his unique, well-beloved son, to offer him up as a burnt offering to God.

So we want to continue tonight and explore that subject, follow that thread through the Old Testament, let's say, of commitment to the Lord. And it's going to bring us, first of all, to Leviticus chapter 1. This was alluded to in the breaking of bread. I was rather interested this morning, the burnt offering.

And it links very nicely with what we had this morning, Abraham and Isaac going up to Mount Moriah. We just read a few verses in the first chapter, Leviticus chapter 1, verse 2. Speak to the children of Israel. Say to them, when any one of you brings an offering to the Lord, you shall bring your offering of the livestock, of the herd, and of the flock.

If his offering is a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish. He shall offer it of his own free will at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the Lord. Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him.

He shall kill the bull before the Lord. The priest's heir and son shall bring the blood and sprinkle the blood all around the altar that's by the door of the tabernacle of meeting. He shall skin the burnt offering and cut it into its pieces.

The sons of Aaron, the priest, shall put fire on the altar and lay the wood in odd order on the altar. Then the priest, Aaron's son, shall lay the parts, the head and the fat, in order on the wood that is on the fire upon the altar. But he shall wash its entrails and its legs with water.

The priest shall burn all on the altar as a burnt sacrifice of offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord. Now, I know that in our assemblies, and I'm grateful for this, when we think of the burnt offering, we immediately think of the Lord Jesus Christ. This points forward to the Lord Jesus and what he did there on Calvary's cross, where he was totally consumed by the fires of God's judgment in consecration to God the Father.

But I'd like to think with you tonight, not so much along that line, what did it mean to a Jew in those days? What did it mean to a Hebrew when he made this offering to the Lord? Well, let's use a little sanctified imagination here. Here we see a Hebrew, and he's coming around the enclosure of the tabernacle. And he comes to the entrance.

He has a young bullock, a rope around the bullock's neck. And probably the bullock is a bit reluctant. Don't blame him if he is.

And he's rather dragging this bullock. And they come through the entrance. And of course, the first thing they come to is the altar there, the brazen altar.

The fire is going, of course, in the altar. Maybe they can just feel the heat as they pass by it. And what's going through that Hebrew's mind when he's doing this? Well, I'll tell you what he's going, what he's thinking about.

He's thinking about how good the Lord has been to him. He's been rehearsing the benefits of the Lord to him. Once again, I remind you, he didn't have a New Testament.

He didn't live on this side of Calvary. But he was like the psalmist who said, bless the Lord, O my soul, of all that is within me. Bless his holy name.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. That was the language of his heart when he was bringing that animal to sacrifice it to the Lord. He was thinking of the steadfast love of Jehovah.

He was thinking of the mercy of God and the grace of God. And his heart was just absolutely filled with gratitude as he thought about it. And he remembers that the animal that he's going to offer must be a clean animal.

That is, it must chew the cud and have a cloven hoof. The chewing of the cud, of course, speaks of the meditation of the word of God, of the cloven hoof, of a separated life. Sorry, that's kind of a forbidden word today, isn't it? Separation.

Oh, yeah, you don't talk about separation today. No, no. It's all ecumenical talk today.

The animal must be without blemish. And now he's going to offer it of his own free will to the Lord. So he passes through the entrance, I say, of the curtain enclosure, and he comes immediately to the brazen altar.

And holding the rope in his left hand, he places his hand on the head of the animal. What is he saying when he, first of all, he's identifying himself with the animal? And he says, what's going to happen to this animal physically, materially, is what I want to be true in my life. This animal is going to be all for God.

And I want to be all for God. If he had been living today, he might say, thou hast bled and died for me. Henceforth, I will live for thee.

That's the burning. That's the burnt offering. At this point, he probably ties the legs of the animal, rolls it over on its side, and ties its legs front and back.

And then he takes a well-sharpened knife. And with one deft stroke, he runs the knife across the throat of the bullock. And a priest is there.

The priest catches the blood from the animal's neck. And sprinkles it on the altar. A few death spasms, and then the animal lies motionless.

And then the animal is skinned. And the skin is the only part that's not put on the altar. See, I like to give, I'm still a teacher at heart, and I like to give assignments.

The assignment is, why isn't the skin of the animal included in the burnt offering? OK, now you have your assignment. Having faced the problem, let us go on bravely. The offerer skins the animal, cuts it in pieces, and the priest lays the pieces upon the altar.

And this is the unique feature of the burnt offering. It is wholly consumed. In some offerings, the priest got part of the meat, and the offerer got part of the meat.

But not in this one. This is all for God. They dismembered parts of the animal, and burnt upon the altar, until the whole carcass is consumed, all but the skin.

And as I say, this is a wonderful type of the Lord Jesus, and his total consecration to the Lord. But that's not what the man is saying here. I think the New Testament equivalent of this would be Romans 12, 1 and 2. I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice.

This was a dead sacrifice. That you present your bodies a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. Be not conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

That's the burnt offering. A living sacrifice to God. The poet wrote, his hands and feet and heart, all three, were pierced for me at Calvary.

And here and now, to him I bring my hands, feet, heart, an offering. I like the fact that one of the important features of this was that it was a sweet savor offering. What does that mean? I think this is surprising.

First of all, let me say, there are a lot of things that happen on Earth that are known in heaven. Did you ever think, what do the people in heaven know that happens down here on Earth? Well, I'll tell you one thing they know. They know when somebody's saved, don't they? There's rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God.

Of a one sinner who repents, more than over 99 just persons who need no repentance, that they know it when somebody's saved up there. It would be wonderful if somebody would trust Christ in this conference, this come and repent and send, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's set the bells ringing in heaven.

What else do they know in heaven? I believe they know when the backslider returns to the Lord in heaven. I think they know that. You say, why do you say that? Well, because of the parable of the prodigal son.

When that prodigal son came back, the household became a place of festivity, and rejoicing, and celebration. The father said, bring out the matted cotton. And they began to make merry.

Well, I want to tell you, if a human father calls up on the household to start the joy bells ringing, I think it happens in heaven too, don't you? When a backslider comes back to the Lord. I think the prayers of the saints are known in heaven because of Revelation 8, again, which was read in the meeting this morning. And you have the Lord Jesus there.

And the prayers of the saints are going up to heaven. And he takes the prayers of the saints, and he adds the fragrance of his own person and work, and presents them to God the Father. It's all public.

It's not done in secret there in heaven. Prayers of the saints. But you know, I believe there's something else that happens.

I believe when a Christian, a man or a woman, a young man or a young woman, gets down on his knees and say, Lord Jesus, I want to be that burnt offering for you. I believe that the fragrance of that offering fills the throne of God. It's a sweet savor offering.

And if an animal, if the savor of an animal did it, I want to tell you, the savor of a human being doing that, presenting that burnt offering to the Lord, you do it as well. When the Lord Jesus finds believers who are willing to give their bodies a living sacrifice for him, he takes great pleasure in them. The throne room of the universe is filled with a fragrance of a sweet aroma.

I forgot one thing. When a deed of kindness is done in the name of the Lord Jesus, it's known in heaven. In Philippians chapter 4, the Philippians had sent a gift of money to the apostle Paul.

And he said, I received that which you sent by Epaphroditus. He said, it was the odor of a sweet smell. He said, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.

And as J. Jowett said, he said, those Philippians just thought that they did something of a very local neighborhood, you know, giving that gift to Paul. He said, the fragrance of it filled the universe. It's nice to know that, isn't it? That when you do something for the Lord, the fragrance of that gift done in the name of the Lord Jesus fills the throne room of God.

What a wonderful God we have. The lesson of the burnt offering is this. Give God all that there is of you.

I say that to you young people that are here tonight. Give God all that there is of you. Let people call you a fanatic.

I say, be a fanatic for Jesus. Give him every part of you, all for Jesus, all for Jesus, all my beings ransomed, powered, all my thoughts and words and doings, all my days and all my hours. Let my hands perform his bidding.

Let my feet run in his ways. Let my eyes see Jesus only. Let my lips speak for his praise.

That's the burnt offering. But you know, there's another ritual in the Old Testament that we should think about briefly, and this subject of commitment. I don't think any treatment of the subject of commitment in the Old Testament would be complete without this.

I call it earmarked for life. Earmarked. It doesn't surprise you to know that there was slavery in the Old Testament.

Sometimes a Jew would fall into such deep debt he would become bankrupt, and the only thing he could do was sell himself into slavery. In order to get rid of that debt. Now, you say, does the Bible condone slavery? No, the Bible doesn't condone it.

It records slavery as a historical fact. But the Lord, in his great mercy, passed legislation for the people how they were to treat the slaves. They were not to be oppressive with the slave.

There's a Bill of Rights here for slaves, and he saved them from cruel and abusive treatment. But one particular law that God passed was this, that after a slave had been in that condition for seven years, he could go out free. He could go out.

That was something, no matter how hard his labor was, it was wonderful to think, six more years, five more years, one more year, and then I'm a free man. But the Lord realized, too, that some of those slaves would realize they had a good master. They had a good master, and they realized that they were better off with that master than they would be out on their own.

And so there was that lovely little ritual there in the Old Testament where, at the seventh year, they could go over and place the lobe of their ear on the door, and with an awl, their ear would be pierced. And they would say, I love my master. I will not go out free.

And you know, that should be true of every one of us, too. We should all have that pierced ear, shouldn't we, and say, I love my master. I will not go away free.

Some see, of course, a reference to the Lord Jesus in this, whose ear had been pierced in permanent servitude to God. The application, of course, is very clear. We were the slaves of Satan, and he was leading us about at his will.

We were deceived, and we were burdened, and we were oppressed. The devil, I tell you, is the worst of masters. Thief cometh not but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.

Jesus came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly. We met Jesus, and he delivered us from that terrible dominion of the evil one. Dear friends, the Lord Jesus had been good to us beyond imagination, hasn't he? Beyond imagination or calculation.

And you know, the interesting thing is we can go on living. After all he did for us, we can go on living for ourselves. We can go on living for our own pleasure.

We can go on doing our own thing if we want. We can live for material things. We can live as if making money was the only important thing in life.

We can go to the door, as it were, say, just earmark me for life. I think that's where the word earmark came from, don't you? Just earmark me for life. Blessed Lord Jesus, I want to be yours forever and forever.

Bishop Handley Mole, I think, captured the thought of the piercing of the ear in these words. My master, lead me to thy door. Pierce this now willing ear once more.

Thy bonds are freedom. Let me stay with thee to toil, endure, obey. Yes, ear and hand and thought and will, use all in thy dear slavery still.

I like that. Use all in thy dear slavery still. Self's weary liberties I cast beneath thy feet.

There, keep them fast. Tread them still down, and then I know these hands shall with thy gifts overflow. And pierced ears shall hear the one which tells them, thou and I are one.

I want to tell you, his service is perfect freedom, isn't it? Never was a master like the Lord Jesus. People are afraid to turn their lives over to the Lord Jesus. As a kid, there are people here tonight, I believe it, who can turn over their souls to the Lord for eternal salvation, and they don't dare turn over their lives to Christ to let him manage them down here.

It's true. How do you know it's true? Because it was true in my life for many years. You can trust the Lord.

You have faith to trust the Lord Jesus for the eternal salvation of your soul. You don't have faith to let him control your life down here. This is what I'm talking about this weekend.

A woman came up to me at the end of the meeting recently. She said, President MacDonald, I don't get what you were just driving at. I said, well, this is what I'm driving at.

That's why I tell you, tonight, this is what I'm driving at. If we can trust him for salvation, we can trust him to run our lives down here. Frances Ridley Havergal, some of you are familiar with her writing.

She said, I love, I love my master. I will not go out free. She determined that she would not do it either.

For he is my redeemer. He paid the price for me. I would not leave his service.

It is so sweet and blessed. And in the weariest moments, he gives the truest rest. For he has met my longing with words of golden tone that I shall serve forever himself, himself alone.

You know, there were, in the Old Testament, I think I might have mentioned, there were hired servants and bond servants. A hired servant worked for money. Money was his motivation.

A bond servant belonged to his master. And when the Lord legislated that when a bond servant was released at the end of six years, the master had to give him wine, and food, and provision, and everything he needed. And he was, some masters were tempted to balk at that.

You know, I said, let me tell you something. A bond servant is worth twice what a hired servant is. Did you know that's true today? That's true today.

A bond servant is worth twice what a hired servant is. I'll let you figure that out. Paul spoke of himself.

I like that. He said, Paul, an apostle and bond servant of Jesus Christ. Dear friends, he was an apostle by appointment.

He was a bond servant by personal choice. He was an apostle because God called him to be an apostle. But he was a bond servant because he didn't want it any other way.

So remember that those who served the Lord Jesus Christ out of a heart of love are worth twice as much as those who suppose that godliness is great gain. We go on to the Old Testament. Commitment.

Commitment in the Old Testament. No subject on this, no dissertation on this subject is complete unless you bring the ladies into it. Because I really believe that, in general, in the history of the Christian religion and of Judaism, too, ladies shine out with greater luster than men.

It's true in the New Testament certainly, isn't it? Those who follow the Lord, the Lord Jesus. And the culture in the Old Testament was very demeaning to women. But many of them rose above that to show the world what true devotedness really is.

And two of them were ladies, two of those ladies, each of them has a book in the Bible named after her. I think that's great. We're talking about Ruth and Esther.

And Ruth is really a bright star in the galaxy of the committed women. She had a fiercely loyal commitment to Naomi, didn't she? Not only to Naomi, but to Naomi's God as well. Naturally speaking, Ruth was kind of anonymous.

She was what they would call today a non-person. She came from a despised race, you know, the Moabites. She came from a family of nobodies.

And she came from a race that was cursed by God and despised by God's people. She was a woman, a sex that was depreciated in that culture. Her husband died, she was a widow, left her childless, and her mother-in-law was a Jew, an alien, a foreigner in Ruth's homeland.

And then came that moment which the poet says comes to every man and nation a moment to decide. Naomi was going to go back to Bethlehem, Judah. And the question was, would Ruth go back with her? Orpah had made her mind up she would not go back.

And Ruth was determined that she would go back with her. Her decision is a classic of commitment. I don't think there's anything in the Old Testament like it.

What did she say? She said, don't ask me to leave you and turn back. I will go wherever you go and live wherever you live. Your people will be my people and your God will be my God.

I will die where you die and will be buried there. May the Lord punish me severely if I allow anything but death to separate us. That's great, isn't it? Don't ask me to leave you.

Don't even think about it. Don't even mention the words she's saying. I've made up my mind to follow you.

There's no turning back. Let us just examine the extent of her devotedness in the words that she spoke. She had a new person to follow.

Don't ask me to leave you. Naomi gets a bad press among a lot of preachers. They think of her as a backslider and all the rest for a woman.

I tell you, Ruth saw something in Naomi. She realized that she was a woman of God. She realized that she was a mother in Israel.

She saw a greatness in her. And she thought this mother in Israel is worthy to be followed. A new place to live.

She said, where you live, I will live. That's something she suppressed, her own nationalistic spirit, her love for Moab. She was willing to make a break with family and friends and her native environment.

She's a new family. Your people will be my people. She became a Jewish proselyte, really a convert to Judaism, a daughter of Abraham by adoption.

She cast in her lot with God's people. She's despised by the world, yet the excellence of the earth. And then she said, a new religion.

Your God will be my God. Oh, boy, that was saying goodbye to all the pagan gods of Moab. All the idols of Moab.

All the rituals and shrines of Moab. And she embraced the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when she said that. I want to tell you, dear friends, this is commitment.

A new place to die. She said, where you die, I will die. What was she saying? It's going to be a lifelong commitment.

A lifelong commitment. I'm going to be with you until you die, and when you die, I will die. She wanted to be identified with Naomi and her death as well as in her life.

And this is what we should be saying in baptism, isn't it? Where you die, I will die. Identifying myself with the Lord Jesus and the waters of baptism. I hope all that were here tonight are believers and are baptized.

You say, Brother McDonald, you know that baptism is not necessary for salvation. I know it's not. But I also know if you're not baptized and go to heaven that way, you'll never be baptized.

Because there are no baptisteries in heaven. The Presbyterians think they can get baptized in the river of life. I think it's a misconception.

A new burial place. Where you are buried, I will be buried. That's interesting.

Traditionally, people want to go back to where they came from to be buried. You know, the patriarchs in the Old Testament did, didn't they? Jacob and Joseph, they wanted to go back and have their bodies transported from Egypt to Canaan. She didn't care for anything.

Even salmon want to do that. They want to go back to the place where they began and die there. Where you are buried, I will be buried.

Here she was, an obscure young widow. She committed herself without reservation to the God of Israel. As a result, she married a man of outstanding character.

She became an ancestress of the Messiah. She had a book of the Bible named after her. Dear friends, you never know.

The day you commit your life to the Lord Jesus for service. What great things he has in store for you. When Ruth made that decision, she had no idea what God had planned for her.

Just think of that. Married to a poet. It's a great thing.

Came right into the line of the Messiah. What could be more wonderful than that? Had a book of the Bible named after her. Memorialized forever.

You never know. The day you turn over your life to the Lord. You make that total commitment to him.

You never know what he has in store for you. The other woman, of course, was Esther. I want to tell you, you and I wouldn't be talking about her tonight if she had waffled.

If she hadn't come clean, we wouldn't be talking about her tonight. I want to tell you, it was a marvelous converging of circumstances that brought a Jewish maiden to the throne of Persia. Wow.

To be queen. The public thought it was her beauty. Wiser minds knew it was her God who arranged it.

A marvelous converging of circumstances with God in the helm. The timing was absolutely perfect. She was in power when her cousin Mordecai uncovered a plot against the king and reported it.

She was in power when murderous Haman nearly succeeded in having Mordecai hanged on a gallows. And she was in power when that villainous anti-Semite had succeeded in having a decree written that the Jews in the kingdom would be exterminated. She was in power.

The name of God is not mentioned in the book of Esther, but God is very prominent in the book of Esther. He's behind the scenes keeping watch above his own. Now the spotlight is on Esther.

Would she go into the king and plead for her people and for herself? Because her fate was linked with the fate of her people. There were two problems. To approach the king, even if he was her husband, to approach him, if he didn't hold out the golden scepter, it was death for her to approach the king.

I suppose this was to protect the king against assassins, don't you think so? To protect the king against assassins. But the other thing was that they had not had marital relations for a month. So really it was, what shall I say, it was risky.

You've heard it before. The king, if you leave up God out, it was risky. But to help her make her decision, Mordecai sent word that if she didn't do it, God would raise somebody else to do it, but she would miss the blessing.

And she wouldn't be spared any more than the rest of the Jews. He really believed that God would somehow restore the Jews, although he didn't know how, but she would miss the blessing of being their savior. And then he topped his appeal with those memorable words, who knowest, but thou art come to the kingdom at such a time as this.

You know, I think that's a word we can take to ourselves. How do you know, but you've come to the kingdom at such a time as this? How do you know if you turn your life over to the Lord, if you might not be God's key in certain situations in life? I believe it with all my heart. Well, that was all Esther needed.

She called on her assistants, the Jews or the citadel, she called on them to fast for three days. It doesn't say to pray, but I tell you, you don't fast without praying, do you? So fasting and prayer for three days. And then she said, I'll go to the king.

She said, if I perish, I perish as commitment. She was laying her life on the line for the Lord. If she hadn't made that decision, we wouldn't be talking about it right now.

It paid off. The king showed grace to her. She was able to expose Haman and the terrible plot that had been drawn up against the Jews.

That decree couldn't be changed. But another decree was made allowing the Jews to defend themselves. And their victory was great when the appointed time came and God even gave them extra time from mopping up operation.

Lesson. Commitment to Christ, to God, receives its greatest test in the fires of adversity. Receives its greatest test in the fires of adversity.

We move on. I just want to mention Caleb briefly. Caleb, that guy.

They say old soldiers don't die, they just fade away. Well, this is an old soldier who didn't fade away. When he was 85, when he was 85, he said he wanted a Hebrew.

He said, give me this mountain. I like that, don't you? You're never too old to be obedient to the Lord. You're never too old to be committed to the Lord.

He wanted to drive the Anakim out of Hebron. Remarkable words for an 85-year-old soldier who could have been fading away in quiet obscurity. Listen to the tribute that's paid to Caleb.

He wholly followed the Lord God of Israel. What an end time. He wholly followed the Lord God of Israel.

Then, of course, there was Jonathan. I like Jonathan as an illustration of commitment. He was committed to David.

Jonathan was next in line to the throne. He was to succeed Saul. He knew that David was God's choice.

He took off his robe, the robe signifying that he was heir apparent to the throne. He gave it to David. That's really commitment.

Merrill Unger writes, his most remarkable characteristic was his ardent and unselfish devotion to his friends, which led him to give up his hopes to the throne, even expose himself to death for the sake of those he loved. Notwithstanding that his affection for his father was repelled by the latter, owing to the king's incentive, he cast his lot with his father's decline, and in death they were not divided. Remarkable.

The fact that Jonathan didn't join David in exile shouldn't be allowed to diminish the truth of his large heartedness. David had some tremendous followers. I'd love to read about some of David's followers and how committed they were to him.

One of them was Amasai. He was the chief captain who came to David at Ziklag. We don't know much about him.

In fact, he's mentioned in only one verse of the Bible. One verse of the Bible. Amasai.

But he's memorable because of the eloquent pledge he made to David. Let me read it to you. We are yours, O David.

We are on your side, O son of Jesse. Peace, peace to you, and peace to your helpers, for your God helps you. Do you think that pleased David when he heard that? I think so.

Do you think it pleases the Lord Jesus when we say that to him? We are yours, Lord Jesus. We are on your side, O son of David. I think the Savior's heart beats just a little faster when he hears us say that to him.

Itzhai was another soldier who was sold out to the king. A Gentile. This is great.

A Gentile. You wouldn't expect a Gentile to be that loyal to a Jewish king, would you? But he was. And when David fled from Jerusalem as a result of Absalom's treason, the king tried to dissuade Itzhai from going with him into exile.

And what did Itzhai say? He said, As the Lord lives, and as my lord the king lives, in whatever place my lord the king shall be, whether in life or death, even there also shall your servant be. And then, of course, there were the three valiant soldiers who were with David there in the cave of Adullam. And one day, David was reminiscing, and he was thinking back to the well in Bethlehem.

There was no water like that well. You know how it is, you think back to your childhood and how things tasted, how things were when you were young. And he just let that sigh slip out from his lips.

And you know, through those three men, they snapped to attention. They said, Your desire is our command, sir. They didn't say those words, but that's their attitude.

Your desire is our command, sir. And they went through enemy lines at the risk of their lives to get water from the well of Bethlehem for David. That's commitment.

That's really commitment. All that mattered to them was to please their master, to please their leader. It was worth their lives just to give him a glass of water.

I mean, we love the Lord Jesus like that, don't we? You go into prayer meeting, well, I know I have a headache, you know. David was so pleased with that. Did he drink it? No, he didn't drink it.

It might seem like ingratitude on David's part, but it wasn't. He poured it on the ground. He said, Far be it from me, O Lord, that I should do this.

Is not this the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives? I want to tell you, if David was pleased by that act, how much more pleased the Savior must be. David's greater son must be when he finds that type of commitment among his followers. You know, the Lord Jesus is thirsty tonight.

Did you know that? He's thirsting for the souls of men in Africa, in Asia, in South America, and other parts of the world. I want to tell you, it pleases his heart when he sees people who are committed and willing to leave all to follow him there. Another man I have to mention, he's one of my favorite characters in the Old Testament, Uriah.

Uriah, he was one of David's soldiers. He was a Gentile, too. Uriah, he was the wife of Bathsheba, Bathsheba with whom David had committed adultery.

This dear man's off in the battle, fighting the king's battles. There's his wife at home, falling into sin. And when Uriah comes back in pretended generosity, David grants him rest and rehabilitation leave.

So he'll go back to his house. And of course, it's to create the impression that the baby to be born would be Uriah's baby. It was a plot.

But you know, the faithfulness of Uriah spoiled David's plot. Be true to Jesus. Though a thousand voices from the world may call.

Listen to Uriah's dedication. He said, The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open field. Shall I then go to my house to eat and drink and to lie with my wife as you live and as your soul lives? I will not do this thing.

I want to tell you something tonight, friends. David was not worthy of a man like that. He was not, but you can't say that about my David.

He's worthy of homage and of praise. Worthy by all to be adored. Exhaustless theme of heavenly lays.

Thou, thou are worthy, Jesus, Lord. And then, of course, we have to think of Daniel and his three friends. And they're there in Persia, you know.

And the king notices them. You know, cream always rises to the surface, doesn't it? It has a way of doing that. And the king notices these men.

And so he decides to melt them down and recycle them as Babylonians. He's going to change their name. He's going to change their language.

He's going to change their diet, their lifestyle, their culture. He's going to change their religion, too. You know, their Hebrew names all had the name of God in them.

All of them. For instance, Daniel, God is my judge. Hananiah, Jehovah is gracious.

Mishiel, who is like God. Azariah, Jehovah is my helper or keeper. But, you know, their Babylonian names that he gave them all had the name of some Babylonian god in it.

Incredible, really. Belteshazzar, Bel, the national god. Shadrach, perhaps the moon god or the city god.

Mishek, means I am humbled before my God, but not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Abednego, servant of people. Well, it's interesting, the first real temptation came in the area of food.

It's funny how tempting it was. It was an easy one, wasn't it? It was, you know, no big deal. Came in the area of food and drink.

Seems quite harmless. They were told to accept the royal menu. But, there was a problem, dear friends.

The royal menu was the best food in all the world. It was gourmet cooking from start to finish. But, it was probably food that had been offered to idols.

It wasn't kosher food. It would have violated the food code of the nation of Israel. Of course, they could eat the food without endorsing it in their hearts.

They could eat it with their own white hearts, not in it, you know. Or, they could say, well, nobody would know, we're enclosed here in the palace, and nobody would know that they were doing it. The fellow Jews would certainly never know.

Besides, everybody was doing it. They didn't consider that. Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with a portion of the Jews' food.

But, Daniel was a wise man, too, and so he worked out a compromise with them. He said, look, just put us on a vegetarian diet, and we'll put this matter to the test. And, they did.

They put them on this vegetarian diet. Ten days later, the king found that they were more handsome, that's quite an incentive, wiser, more understanding than all the others. He had to admit, this is good, he had to admit that they were ten times better than his own astrologers.

I love that. I love it. Ten times better than his own magicians and stuff.

By sticking to their principles, it might seem a rather minor matter, they were honored by God, and prepared for what would prove to be a severe test. And, the severe test wasn't long in coming. The king had a dream, and he got a giant ego trip, and he had this tremendous eight-story monument erected, and he sent out a decree that nobody was going to pray, that everybody was going to bow down.

On the day of the dedication, everyone was going to bow down and worship. And, the penalty for refusing was to be thrown into a burning, firing furnace. My word, I tell you, my mind could work over time now, couldn't yours? Escape routes.

I think Daniel, Daniel's not mentioned here, I think he was away at the time, but, you know, his example wasn't lost on those three fellows. And, by now, they had spines of steel. They would rather go to heaven with a good conscience, than stay on earth with a bad one.

I think it was the court advisors who reported them, that they weren't worshipping this false god, that they were jealous because these fellows had been promoted to be heads over the provinces. And, when the king heard it, he couldn't believe it. He couldn't believe that anybody would dare to defy his order.

Did they think that their god could rescue them from his power? And, the young Hebrews knew that he could. So, when the king delivered his final ultimatum, they said, I like this, 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. Thank God for men with convictions. Thank God for men with commitment.

We don't have a lot of that today. Most of us would make very poor martyrs. Too dry to burn.

But, they knew that it was better to burn than to compromise. Better to die than to deny their principles. The king was livid with rage, livid with rage.

He ordered the furnace to be heated to the max, and the three young nonconformists to be thrown in. I tell you, just the prospect of that is enough to induce cardiac arrest, isn't it? Isn't your heart beating a little faster when you read about that? But, notice what happened. This is beautiful.

The flames killed the executioners that threw them in. Yeah. The three young men weren't deserted by the Lord.

He was with them there in the fire. I like that. You know, what does a hot fire mean if the Lord's with you? It doesn't mean a thing.

All the fire did was destroy the ropes that burned them. When they came out, their clothing was not burned. Their hair was not singed.

There wasn't even the smell of smoke upon them. My, what a discerning, discriminating fire. What happened? The king made an edict honoring the God of these Hebrews.

Yeah. Man has his wickedness, but God has his way, doesn't he? God has his way. And he threatened death to anyone who spoke against the God of the Hebrews.

He also promoted three fireproof men. Spurgeon said, if you yield an inch, you're beaten. But if you will not yield, no, not the splitting of a hair, they will respect you.

The man who can hide his principles, conceal his beliefs, and so do a little wrong is a nobody. You can't shake the world if you let the world shake you. That's good.

Archimedes said that he could move the world if he could get a fulcrum outside the world, you know. But the key to that statement is outside the world. You can't move the world as long as you're a part of it.

You have to be separated from the world in order to move the world. And just finally, in closing, Daniel, at the end of life, Daniel is now between 80 and 90 years old. Between 80 and 90.

He's a powerful figure in the kingdom of Persia. And his jealous colleagues wanted some way to get rid of him. But they knew that he was a man of sterling character.

How in the world would they ever find some valid charge against him? His spotless character and conduct made it very, very difficult. But it was an unintended tribute when they concluded the only way to get rid of him was to outlaw prayer to his God. That's marvelous, isn't it? Daniel preferred a den of lions to spending a day without prayer to God.

He preferred the den of lions. So an unchangeable law is passed. And the next month, anyone who prayed to any god or man except King Darius would be thrown to the lions.

Daniel couldn't think of a single good reason why he should stop praying. I could have thought of a few. Three times a day, he knelt in his room, facing toward Jerusalem, giving thanks and making earnest supplication.

That wasn't all. He knelt by an open window. Why? He'd always done it.

Why should he change now? It wasn't that he began to pray by an open window. He always did it. And since his colleagues were looking for a chance to find him breaking the law, they didn't have long to wait.

Nothing was done in his secret. Daniel didn't pray under his blanket. He didn't pray silently in his heart.

He prayed out loud in full humor. And the reluctant king had no alternative. He had to be thrown.

Meat for the lions. But wait. Daniel is having a good night's sleep down there.

And the king is having a king-sized case of insomnia. It's the way it is. That's exactly what happened.

In the morning, God's man came out in perfect condition. God had shut the lion's mouth. His accusers were slain, and his God was honored by a royal decree.

The lion would have time, saying, no, they haven't changed. Still the same God. Yeah, still the same God.

Think of the glory that came to God as a result of Daniel's commitment. That man knew nothing of what Robert G. Lee called invertebrate theology, jellyfish morality, see-saw religion, India rubber convictions, and somersault philosophy. Those committed ones had convictions for which they were willing to die.

Their dedication of the Lord was final and irrevocable. For them, the will of God was paramount. They had nothing but contempt for escape routes, for easy alternatives, for excuses.

In life or in death, they were the Lord's. God is looking for men and women like that today. In a day when things are sliding, in a day when doctrine is discounted, doctrine divides, the great thing is just to unite together, get together.

God is looking for men and women who will take a stand for Him in this world.

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