

**THE SOWER
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A TOUGH CHOICE

Living in a society that is hostile to one's innermost convictions is tough. Picture in your mind three young men who have been brought up obviously in a godly home, but with the fall of their nation, find themselves in a foreign culture that has no respect for their God. At first, their godly demeanor wins the favor of their captors—but not for long. Eventually their religion gets them in trouble with the king. You may read the account in the eighth chapter of the Old Testament-book of Daniel. The 3 young men were Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, Jewish captives in idolatrous Babylon, ruled by King Nebuchadnezzar. They fared well until the king decreed that all must bow before the idolatrous image he had erected. . They were compelled to make a tough choice: either bow before the king's image, or be cast into a burning, fiery furnace. I would suggest that we can draw from this event three important facts.

First, the world expects conformity to its standards. Godly standards are seldom long respected. Even in a "Christian nation," there exist forces that are hostile to Biblical values. After all, "the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one" (1 John 5:19, NKJV). These three Jews would continue to prosper in the favor of the king if they would only compromise their conviction that there was only one God, but to now bow before his image would appear disastrous. Would they "bite the hand that feeds them," or be true to God. Even with our nation's history of freedom, the pull of political correctness soon wins out. Society may, for a time, tolerate differences, but will eventually turn up the heat on those who would differ. When it does, Christians must be ready, as these three young men, to stand firm. Two of today's idols that we are expected to bow before are abortion and same-sex "marriage," which remind us of the ancient gods, Moloch and Eros. We can be accepted if we keep our opinions to ourselves and be willing to compromise our convictions.

Second, we are given a choice of gods. The tough choice these three made was to continue to serve God, and bow before none other—not even the king's. Many serve God only as long as they get what they want. These three knew God could save them

from the furnace, but would He? Let's remember, God is still God—even when we're in a "fiery furnace" . God is not a god who must fit my criteria.

Third, Faith wins out. The furnace was stoked seven times its normal heat. The men who threw them in were, themselves, destroyed by the heat, while the three servants of God were spared. Their faith won out! Today, we live in the aftermath of the "sexual revolution" of the '60s. Many thought we were liberated from Biblical standards, but in the process our nation is "burned" with the fires started by a permissive society. The price of this so-called sexual freedom is broken homes, an increase in sexually-transmitted diseases drug abuse, sexual violence, single parenting, mounting economic problems, etc. While the three young Jews in Daniel stood up for what's right, God stood up for them. Four, not three, were seen in the furnace—one "like the Son of God" (v. 25). The young men walked out without so much as their hair singed or the smell of smoke. God does not always

choose to deliver His people from the "furnaces" of trial, but, if faithful, we will ultimately be delivered. In the context of Paul speaking of our resurrection, he says, "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57). Sometimes it seems Satan is in command, "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Rom. 8:37)

--Ron

"There is no surer sign of decay in a country than to see the rites of religion held in contempt."

(Nicolo Machiavelli)

SET FREE

Eating lunch at a small café, Mark Reed of Camarillo, California saw a sparrow hop through the open door and peck at the crumbs near his table. When the crumbs were gone, the sparrow hopped to the window ledge, spread its wings and took flight. Brief flight. It smashed against the windowpane and fell to the floor.

The bird quickly recovered and tried again. Crash! And again. Crash!

Mark got up and attempted to shoo the sparrow out the door, but the closer he got, the harder it threw itself against the pane. He nudged it with his hand. That sent the sparrow fluttering along the ledge, hammering its beak at the glass.

Finally, Mark reached out and gently caught the bird, folding his fingers around its wings and body. It weighed almost nothing. He thought of how powerless and vulnerable the sparrow must have felt. At the door, he released it, and the sparrow sailed away.

As Mark did with the sparrow, God takes us captive only to set us free.

“Blessed be he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them—the LORD who remains faithful forever. He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets prisoners free....” (Psalm 146:5-7, NIV)
--Logansport Life Lines

AN ADMISSION FROM TWENTY ONE YEARS AGO: Referring to a conference of homosexual teachers and students held in Atlanta, William F. Jasper wrote in an article in *The New American* magazine, Nov. 8, 1999: “[T]here is no doubt as to the subversive agenda afoot. ‘The fear of the Religious Right is that the schools of today are the governments of tomorrow,’ Deanna Darby of the National Education Association told the symposium. ‘And you know that they’re right.’ ‘If we do our jobs right,’ chimed in James Anderson, GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network) director of communications, ‘we’re going to raise a generation of kids who don’t believe the claims of the Religious Right.’” The article went on to point out that we would have to include in the ‘Religious Right’ such Americans as George Washington, who declared that ‘Religion and morality are the essential pillars of civil society,’ and warned against those who would undermine them. And John Adams who opined: ‘Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other.’ Whose side would you rather be on?”

A VOICE FROM THE PAST: “No people ought to feel greater obligations to celebrate the goodness of the Great Disposer of events, and of the destiny of nations, than the people of the United States.” --James Madison

“WHAT SATAN HATES” continues as our topic this morning, with Rev. 12:12-17 as the reading.

PRAY FOR: Ron McConkey's surgery on one eye went well, and he is to have surgery on the other on Dec. 7. *** Though I've not been allowed to visit Doris at the rehab center, due to the pandemic, talking with her on the phone I feel she is doing better. She is on an antibiotic for her sepsis infection, and taking therapy to be able to walk with just her walker. *** Continue to remember: Wayne Polk (Shelbyville minister; health problems); and Ruby Bradd (Clinton; recovering from cancer).

Continue in prayer for the many in communist and Muslim countries especially, who are subject to intense persecution for their faith in Christ.