

"Saying No"

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Have you ever said Yes, when you knew that you ought to have said No? Have you ever felt afraid to obey God for fear of what someone might say or do? Let me tell you a true story.

Years ago in the city of Jerusalem lived three young men. They were very much like any other young men, only they had thoroughly learned one thing,—they had learned to love God with all their hearts. They had become acquainted with Him and His word. They had proved Him and found that He always kept His promises, and that no other friend was so able and willing to help them. They had learned that if He was for them He was more than all that could be against them. It was well that they knew this, for they were soon to pass through some very trying times.

One day a mighty king with his soldiers came and surrounded their city and overcame it, and carried them away from all their friends to Babylon, the great city where the king lived.

How glad they must have been, then, that they knew the best Friend of all! Although they were so far from home, they could not feel alone, for they knew that God was with them in Babylon as much as He was in Jerusalem. They therefore took courage knowing that all would work together for their good if they continued to love and trust God.

They cheerfully studied the new language and all the other things that the king wanted them to learn, and, with God's help, became very wise, good men, loved and respected by all who knew them. The king was so well pleased with them that he finally set them over the great affairs of his province. But you will see that they did not become proud and forget the Friend who had brought them into all this prosperity. They knew that it was God who had been with them and had given them all that they had.

The king had heard of their God, but was not himself acquainted with Him. He looked upon Him as but one of the many gods, like unto their idols. But God wished to teach the king that He alone was God, and that the idols which they worshipped were of no good at all.

The king made a great image of gold about ninety feet high and nine feet broad, and set it up in a plain near the city of Babylon. Then he sent word to all the great men and rulers of the provinces to come to the dedication of the great image.

And they came. What a sight it must have been! There were princes, governors, captains, judges, treasurers, counsellors, sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces standing before the bright image of gold which the king had set up. As the three young Hebrew men were rulers, of course they also were there, besides musicians with their cornets, flutes, harps, sackbuts, psalteries, and singers.

Then a man cried out very loudly so that they all might hear, "To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, that when you hear the sound of the cornet and all the other kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the golden image that the king hath set up; and

whoso falleth not down and worshipping shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning, fiery furnace." [Dan. 3:4-6]

Suddenly the music began, and the people, not daring to disobey, all dropped on their knees and began to worship.

Did I say all the people began to worship? No, no, that is a mistake. Three lone men stood straight up, and did not bow at all! Can you think who they were?

The three men from Jerusalem knew that that image was not God. They were acquainted with the true God, and although they felt sorry to hurt the feelings of the king who had been so kind to them, they thought it would be far worse to grieve the heart of the One who had given them their lives and everything else that they had ever had, and who had loved them so much that He had given His only Son to die that they might be saved. If God had suffered all that for them, surely they ought to be willing to suffer a little for Him. They knew well enough that it would grieve Him if they should only bow down to the image, even though they should not worship it in their hearts, for He had plainly commanded them not to make unto them any graven image, and not to bow down to them or serve them. And then it would look as though they were ashamed of their God, and afraid to trust Him. No, no, they very quickly decided that they would rather die than grieve their best Friend. So they did not bow down.

As soon as the king heard about it he was very angry and sent for them and said, "Is it true, did you purposely disobey me and not bow down? I shall now give you one more chance. I shall have the music sound again, and if you bow down when you hear it, it will be well with you, but if not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands!"

The three Hebrews did not hesitate a moment, but said, "We do not care for another chance; if our God thinks best He is able to deliver us out of your hand, and He will; but even if He does not think best to do this, be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

Then the king was full of fury and had them bound by his mightiest men and cast into the furnace heated seven times more than it was wont to be heated, and they fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

The fire was so hot that it slew the men who cast them in, but to the great astonishment of the king it did not seem to hurt the three Hebrews at all.

The king rose up in haste and said unto his governors, "Did not we cast three men bound into the fire?"

They answered, "True, O king."

He answered and said, "Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

Then the king came near the door of the furnace and called the three men, and said, "Ye servants of the most high God, come forth and come hither."

Then they came out of the fire, and the princes, governors, captains, and the king's counsellors gathered together and saw them. The fire had no power at all upon their bodies, not a hair of their head was singed, their coats were not changed, and there was not even the smell of fire upon them! The Lord Himself in whom they trusted had come and walked in the fire with them and by His power had kept it from hurting them.

And the king saw that He was God and believed on Him and praised Him, and commanded that if anyone should say a word against Him they should be cut in pieces "because," he said, "there is no other god that can deliver after this sort." The image could not keep its worshippers from being burned, but God could.

How glad the three Hebrews must have been that they had learned to obey God in their youth!

Do not be afraid to take Jesus for your best Friend. He can strengthen you to say No when you are tempted. He is able to deliver you from sin and every other evil thing. He may sometimes allow you to suffer, but remember if He does it is for your good, for He loves you and gave His life to save you.

[This story is found in Daniel chapter 3]