THE CHAMPION THAT PUT GOD FIRST

Erick had prepared for over forty years and was excited to participate in the race. It was an honor to represent his country. Erick approached the schedule to see the different competitions. As he looked at the agenda, he noticed that he would have to make a decisión. The 100 meter race where he was scheduled to participate was going to take place on a day that he considered as sacred. Erick remembered God’s promise, “ “I honor those who honor me.” (1 Samuel 2: 30). He firmly made a decisión to put God first and honor Him above all else. During the 1924 Paris Olympics the following news was reported “Erick Lidell did not participate in the 100 meter race because of his faith, but he did accomplish a win in the 400 meter race and established a new olympic record.” Although Erick was confused about the actual day of worship, he went down in history as an example of someone who put God first.

**The fourth commandment**

AMong the ten commandments there is the fourth where God says, “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns.For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.(Exodus 20:8-11). This is a special commandment because it is part of the first commandments where God is asking us to put Him first. God did three special things on this beautiful day: a) rested; b) blessed; c) sanctified.

**A gift in time**

The sabbath rest is part of the commandments of God, and it leads us to creation where God gave the seventh-day as a gift of love recorded in time to humanity. It is written, “By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creation that he had done.” (Genesis 2:1-3). For this reason when we keep the Sabbath we are actually recognizing God as creator, sustainer, and owner of the universe, earth, and our lives.

**A gift to benefit mankind**

Jesus gave us a beautiful example when he kept the Sabbath. In Luke 4:16, the Bible says that Jesus came to Nazareth where he had been raised and entered the synagogue as was His custom, standing before others to read (Luke 4:16). Jesus said that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27). Jesus invites us to also do good on the Sabbath day (Luke 6:9).

There is a blessing for those who put GOd first and decide to serve Him by keeping the Sabbath. God says, “If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day if you call the Sabbath a delight and the Lord’s holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the Lord, and I will cause you to ride in triumph on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob.” For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.(Isaiah 58:13-14).

**Putting God first**

We have many examples within the Bible of men and women who decided to honor God and put him first. Joseph decided to honor God and not sin against Him (Genesis 39:8-9); Daniel and his friends decided to honor God by not eating the king's food or drinking the wine that the king had sent (Daniel 1:8). They understood that their bodies were the temple of God and they had to honor Him above all else.

One of the most wonderful stories that we find in the Bible is of the three Hebrew youth: Hananiah, Azariah, Mishael. King Nebuchadnezzar changed their names to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel 1:7). Their Hebrew names had beautiful meanings. They were worshippers of God. Hananiah meant beloved of the Lord, Mishael meant He who is like God, and Azariah meant God is my helper. On the other hand, the Babylonian names were related to false gods. Shadrach means illuminated by the sun god, Meshach means, who is like venus, and Abednego was servant of nego.

One day king Nebuchadnezzar sent for a huge statue of gold to be built and demanded all to worship it. Those who did not comply would be thrown into a fiery furnace. Everyone was fearful of the kinds orders. At the sound of the musical instruments everyone bowed except three youth. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel 3). They did not bow to the statue of gold or worship it because they remembered God’s commandments. When they were brought before king Nebuchadnezzar, they responded by saying, “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.”(Daniel 3:16-18). These brave young men decided to honor God and put Him first. God worked in a wonderful manner and sent His Angel to help them. Although the furnace was heated seven times, the fire did not burn them and no harm came to them. It was a miracle! King Nebuchanezzer said, “Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, “Weren’t there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?” They replied, “Certainly, Your Majesty.” He said, “Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.” (Daniel 3:24-25).

**Choose to honor God**

God wants you to put Him first. Do you want to honor Him and obey His word? Remember that God will never leave you, He says, “For I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you.”(Isaiah 41:13)