

The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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Stand or Compromise: What Will You Do? (Part 8)

Daniel 3:16-18

Last month we discussed The Faithfulness of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They stated that God was able to deliver them from the fiery furnace and that He would deliver them from the control of Nebuchadnezzar. They were completely devoted to God. Their faithfulness is something that each of us should strive to emulate. Their entire lives were a testimony to faithfulness. From the time that they were brought to Babylon as teenagers until now about twenty years later, they were faithful to God. It would have been easy to go along with everyone else, but there was something in them that would not let them do it, and they were obedient to that inner leading of God.

What caused their faithfulness? I believe it was their faith in God. Because they truly believed what God said about Himself throughout the Old Testament, they were committed to following Him no matter what the result would be. Faith is the access to salvation—*“For by grace are ye saved through faith”* (Ephesians 2:8a). But faith does not stop when we are saved. Hebrews 11:6 says, *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”* Faith is not just essential to salvation, it is essential to living the Christian life. The verse that I quoted from Hebrews is in the chapter that is often called the Hall of Faith. Each section about these Old Testament characters begins with *“By faith.”* Most of the discussion about them is not related to salvation, but is talking about their faith **after** salvation. Verse 6 is a commentary on Enoch’s life that is recorded in Hebrews 11:5. Verse 5 summarizes how Enoch was translated without dying and the last clause of the verse says, *“For before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.”*

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What was it about Enoch that pleased God? His faith to continue walking with God. What will make us pleasing to God? Our faith to continue walking and serving God.

Now we can go back to the question at the beginning of the last paragraph. What caused the Hebrew men to be faithful to God? Again, it was their faith in God. When you believe that God is as great as He declares Himself to be in Scripture, you will want to be faithful to Him. When you realize that He has never failed you and never will fail you, then you will strive to be as faithful to Him as you can be. Unfaithfulness is an indication of unbelief. It comes down to the reality that you really do not believe that God is what the Bible says about Him. You can make every excuse that is possible as to why you are unfaithful, but they will not truly explain your unfaithfulness. You can blame it on someone or something else, but the real problem is your lack of faith. Everyone recorded in Scripture, and those that have been faithful after the time of the recording of Scripture, have a life characterized by faith. They were faithful because they had faith in God. These Hebrew men were faithful to God because they had faith in God. We must have true faith in God, so we can be faithful to Him.

In verse 18, we see a third aspect to The Proving of Character. It is Their Firmness. Verse 18 says, *“But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”* I have heard some say that the men are wavering a bit in their faith because they say *“But if not,”* but a statement like that just shows a misunderstanding of what the men are saying. They state with absolute faith that God is able to deliver them from the burning fiery furnace. They do not know if He will because He never revealed to them what He might do for them. They believed that if God wanted to deliver them, then He had the power to do so. You must pay attention to the words that they said—He **is able** to deliver. They then change the verb in the last clause and say, *“He will deliver us out of thine hand.”* The last clause, as we have seen, refers to God’s control over their lives. If He wanted them to die,

then they would not be under Nebuchadnezzar's control anymore. If He let them live through the fiery furnace, then that still showed that God was in control, not Nebuchadnezzar. God had the power to preserve their life, if He wanted to do so. Regardless of whether they lived or died, God was in control of every circumstance.

Their statement, "*But if not,*" refers back to the first part of verse 17. They are saying, "But if God does not deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, we still will not bow to your image." That is as firm a conviction as one can have. They have not wavered one bit since their statement along with Daniel about 20 years earlier. Then it was concerning food that they were not supposed to eat and wine that they were not supposed to drink. To many, it probably seemed a small thing to not eat and drink something, but that supposedly small thing was what led them to stand up when something big came along. In fact, I have said often that if they would have surrendered their convictions about the food and drink, then they would have had no problem surrendering their convictions about bowing before the image. There are really no "small" and "big" things when it comes to doing right in the sight of God. There is only right and wrong. These men did right years before on the small thing, and they did right years later when the big issue came up. They did right both times because they determined to do right regardless of the cost. What the king said did not matter. What God said did matter. They were determined to obey God.

Notice again what they said, "*We will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.*" This is not some half-hearted, make-the-people-happy, wishy-washy, feel-good statement. It is a strong, determined, inflexible statement of absolute resolve to do right regardless of what everyone else thinks. They did not take an opinion poll of their family, friends, or the general public. They knew what God said in His Word—"*Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*" That settled what they should do. They did not wonder what everyone else was doing. They did not take time to ask everyone else what they were going to do. The king was giving them

a second chance, but they have made it known to the king that they do not need a second or third chance. What they did the first time was what they were going to do now. They were not going to bow even if it cost them their life. They were absolutely rigid in their devotion to God.

The firmness of these men is what we need today. It seems as if more and more are compromising today. Among our Independent Baptist churches and individuals, conviction is almost seen as a dirty word. Most are going along with the flow of the crowd and adjusting to the desires of the world. Many are changing standards of music and dress just so they can fit in and not be so different than the world. But people and churches have always done that. It was like that in Old Testament times. Most of Israel always forsook God. In each time period, you can read about a few, often called a "*remnant,*" that truly followed God. There were a few times when the nation as a whole served God, but most of the time those truly devoted to God were in a very small minority. Without discussing them, I will simply mention a few who often stood with a small remnant and sometimes by themselves. Some of these will be more familiar than others, but think about Elijah, Elisha, Hanani, Micaiah, Zechariah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and most of the other writing prophets. In this account that we are focusing on, as we have already mentioned, out of a crowd of perhaps 2,000, no one, not even other Jews, stood up and refused to bow. These men were all alone, humanly speaking, but they still refused to do wrong. In the New Testament, we can read about John the Baptist, the Apostles, Stephen, Paul, and others who were told to stop preaching. They did not stop but continued even more. They said, "*We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.*" We must have that same attitude and resolve.

We must be like Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and these other men, plus others that I did not mention. When the world says, "Conform to us and be like us," we must say with absolute firmness and devotion to God, "No, we cannot be like you. We must be like God, and conform ourselves to Him and His Word. When the world

says, “Stop preaching against our sin and stop preaching about Jesus,” we must reply as Jesus did, “We must be about our Father’s business.” The attitude of conformity to the world and the weak, compromising attitude must be rejected. We must have the firmness of these men and do what is right regardless of what others may think.

The language used in verse 18 is interesting. This is the third time that serve and worship have been used in successive sentences. The first time was in verse 12 when the men reported to Nebuchadnezzar what was going on. The second time was in verse 14 when Nebuchadnezzar was asking the Hebrew men if what he had heard was true. The Babylonians were using these words of serving gods and worshiping the image in ways that were familiar to them. They saw no difference between their gods and the God of the Hebrews. In their minds, one god could be replaced with another one. But to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego there was a difference. There was only one true God, Jehovah. He alone was worthy of worship, and He alone was worthy to be served. They could not be devoted to Him and serve or worship any other god. He must have absolute allegiance. They were willing to give that allegiance to Him alone. We must do the same!