

Faith Under Fire

Bubba Garner

Daniel was a prophet during the 70 years of Babylonian captivity. He was of the “royal family and of the nobles” of the Israelites and a “youth” when taken captive (Dan. 1:3-4). The book that bears his name also tells about three of his friends— Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego— who, like him, remained faithful to God in the face of difficult circumstances.

In Daniel 3, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, built a gold statue that measured 90 feet high and 9 feet wide. This was most likely in honor of Babylon being identified as the head of gold in the interpretation of his dream in Daniel 2:37. He then issued a decree that everyone bow down and worship the golden image or be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire. Three of his subjects, namely Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were summoned for their refusal to follow this command.

Like these Hebrew captives, we are strangers in a foreign land. More and more, we are surrounded by people who are not interested in serving God or following His word. We have to stand up and stand out against such a culture and fulfill our purpose of being the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world” (Matt. 5:13-14). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego show the kind of faith needed to survive such a fiery trial.

Have a faith that is your own. When brought before the king, the three answered, “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us” (3:17). They were children of Abraham, born into a nation that God used to carry out His special purposes. But they did not rest on the faith of their fathers. They had a faith that was personal. They were fully convinced in their own minds.

Take personal responsibility for your faith. It is right to learn about God from your parents, your teachers, and other Christians. But there comes a time when you must stand on your own feet. As Paul wrote in 2 Tim. 1:12: “I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.” This will enable you to take a stand for the Lord in the hour of trial. Because you will believe Him with all of your heart.

Have a faith that is with you wherever you go. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were captives in the land of their enemy. They were far away from home and from the authority of their parents and religious leaders. They were surrounded by people who did not fear God. But the law of the Lord commanded them to have no other gods before Him and to not worship an idol (Exodus 20:3-5). They would obey this law no matter what land they were in.

Your faith can have an impact on whoever is around you. Nebuchadnezzar threatened

to throw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego in the furnace and asked, “what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands” (3:15). But because of the faith of three young captives, the king was able to recognize that “there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way” (3:29). Be an influence and you can make a believer out of an infidel.

Have a faith that is unconditional. “Even if he does not, we are not going to worship the golden image you have set up” (3:18). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego believed that God had the power to rescue them from the king. But they did not know for certain that He would. They did not have the specific promise of protection Joshua was given when he led the Israelites into the land of Canaan (Josh. 1:3). They did not have the assurances Paul was given about his personal safety on his journeys (Acts 18:9-10; 23:11). But they had an unconditional faith in God that demanded service, no matter the consequences.

You can't have faith just when it is convenient for you. Unconditional faith is not praying, “Lord, if you get me out of this, then I'll do better.” Or saying to God, “If you answer this prayer the way I want, then I'll be more faithful.” Unconditional faith is staying true to Him even when your faith is being tested by fire (1 Pet. 1:7-9). You have to “be faithful until death” with the assurance that He will give you “the crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). Period.

Perhaps the writer of Hebrews had Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego in mind when he spoke of others who, by faith, “quenched the power of fire” (Heb. 11:34). God's power can do the same thing for you and keep you from the eternal flames of hell.