

BEDWELL GLOBAL MINISTRIES

DEVOTIONAL
SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER

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**FAITH!....FIRE!
FORTITUDE!**

**SCRIPTURAL
BACKGROUND
DANIEL 3:1-25**

FAITH! FIRE! FORTITUDE!

Scripture Reading - Daniel
3:1-25.

The genuineness and usefulness of any commodity is acceptable when it passes the test of durability under stress. For instance is the automobile built to stand the treatment of teenage drivers? Is the aircraft constructed to withstand the pressure of the take off and the landing? Is its body robust enough to keep moving across the skies at long distances for many years. Will it keep us safe on a twenty four hour flight. Can we trust it to stand the intense tests it is called to undergo. Is the bridge that we are about to cross robust enough to see us through to the other side?

These are important issues and questions with which we are often so concerned, and rightly so. What about Christianity? Is it practical and durable? Is there something in its message that will hold us firm in the hour of trial? What about this business of serving God? Or what about this profession of our faith in the Lord Jesús Christ? Will it stand the test of fire? Jesus said to His followers "in the world you will have tribulation or trouble," These were not scare tactics. Jesus was trying to impress upon them the harsh realities of life. They would not be excluded from their harsh attacks simply because they elected to live in complete obedience to Him. Their status as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ followers would not immunize them from pain, pressure or problems. They would have to endure the black spots of life. There would be moments of mystery and questions. These things would happen regardless of who they were. And so the issue was clearly stated. But the question to us is, does our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and our experience of His mighty grace equip us for the difficult hours through which we inevitably have to move. Will it hold us steady in the midst of the fire? This is the issue I want us to deal with in this devotional.

The incident recorded in the history of God's people, serves to teach us that we can be resolute in

the dark hours of life. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were three young men placed in the crucible of faith's conflict. These three young men who were captives of a powerful pagan country, faced a crucial decision. The issue was not so simple. The pagan king Nebuchadnezzar had built a golden image and he issued a decree either bow to this golden god or burn in the fiery furnace. The issue was simple for the Babylonians, but not so for these three young Jewish captives. They were challenged with a critical choice. They were from a different country – different life-style – different in values and a different God – After all Nebuchadnezzar was not their king. They had a King. Jehovah God was their King. He too had issued a decree in the ten commandments, not to worship any other gods other than Jehovah. And so this issue was not so simple for them. They were away from those influences which would make it easy for them to worship Jehovah. And so the challenge lay before them. What was at a stake here was not only their lives, but also the death of their principles and values if they compromised them. But it is clear that they realized that if values and principles were worth living for, they were worth dying for. Their reply indicates this commitment to them. "We want you to know O King, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." How

much more resolute can you be than that? And how much clearer can you state it than that? These young men stood loyal and unshakable in face of daunting circumstances.

There are so many truths that emerge from this incident which we can apply to our journey through life. This story tells us about the,

THE TEST OF THEIR FAITH,

Or the Trial of their faith. Daniel 3: 18. They unapologetically served notice to the king, and that was a dangerous thing to do. ".....we want you to know O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold which have set up." This was faith in conflict. This was faith being tested. This was faith on trial and this is faith's conviction and confession clearly set down in the midst of paganism. When everything that surrounded it was hostile and threatening it was determined, distinct and durable.. This was no game. These man's lives were on the line. They refused to bow to a gold image created by a man. I suggest that their faith was tempted in those hours. They had been forcibly removed from those influences which would make faith easier. They were taken away from their land where faith basked in the sunshine of religious freedom. They were severed from the atmosphere where faith reveled in the

spontaneous worship of the living God. They were in Babylon now. They were among pagans now, where gods had to be seen, felt and touched. It was a place and where gods created by kings were to be believed and worshipped. This is where their faith met its test. There was no doubt a temptation to renounce their faith and yield to three temptations all of which would have made life easier. Theirs was the temptation of,

the way of comfort

Daniel 3:13-18. It was the temptation to take the way of least resistance. That was the test. There is no doubt that it would have been more comfortable to have worshipped the god image. What must have heightened the intensity of this temptation was that these three men were men of political position and power in Babylon. The scripture tells us that they were set over the affairs of Babylon. The temptation would have been not to do anything that would disturb that position or destroy that comfort and dispose of that honor. They could have said "let us not endanger the comfort and ease we have in Babylon. We can let down our down on our godly principles for a few days while this fad of worshipping the gold image is with us. It would not do any harm to put aside the purposes of faith for the popularity of the king. How will anyone know the difference. Let us do

what it takes to keep our comfortable position in the Kingdom of Babylon even if it means bowing to a gold image." This would be the temptation to walk in the way of comfort. But I suggest that there was also the temptation to walk in,

the way of the crowd.

Daniel 3:13-18. This is the temptation to walk in the way of popularity. - The way of society. "Everyone is bowing to the gold image and so let us bow too. We don't want to stand out as some kind of fanatic." They were under old fashioned peer pressure.

It is interesting how so many are impressed and influenced by the crowd. They feel that they have to please the crowd. They live to receive its applause and feed on its approval. The crowd's approval is their meat and drink. They live to please and placate the crowd. Popularity is the opium of their existence. So many of their decisions are based on what the crowd thinks. They move with the polls. Their purposes fluctuate with the crowd's purposes. Their principles are dominated by the crowd's principles. If you live this way the crowd feels for, thinks for you and chooses for you. The tragedy is that if the crowd go to hell so will they. No one who is controlled by the crowd, dominated by peer pressure is his own master. The crowd is his

master and his slave driver.

But these young men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had decided that their purposes in life would be guided by the purposes of God.. Their principles had been established by the standards of God's holiness. Obviously they determined that they would live by them, live for them and if necessary die for them. As a result the persistent pressure of the crowd made no impact on them at all. Their faith reached beyond the temptation of the way of the crowd, and found its anchor in God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and there it remained fixed, resolute and unshakable. I think too there was the temptation of

the way of compromise

Daniel 3:14. It was the temptation walk in the way of divided allegiances. They faced a timeless challenge. Everyone faces it. Choose this day whom you will serve. King Nebuchadnezzar issued the same kind of challenge. "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image I have set up." There is no middle ground here. There is no place for neutrality in this critical hour in their lives. But their decision had been made. They knew that it was impossible to serve both the gold image and the living God. But they had made their

commitment to God and stood by it. They refused to bow. They rejected any thought of compromise. Their faith was tested and it stood firm. The test of faith gave birth to,

THE TESTIMONY OF THEIR FAITH.

Or the confession of their faith. Daniel 3:17-18. Their words pulsate with power. Their confession of faith reveal this to be true. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and He will save us from your hand O King. But even if He doesn't if He does not, we want you to know O King, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." Not all the power in Babylon could batter and smash their fortress of faith. This a bold and reckless faith. It is the kind of faith that steps out from behind the cover of non-committal and says to the a pagan world "here I am. Do what you can to me, but whatever you do I will not be moved. Our God is able to rescue us, but even if He does not we will not waver." Notice that they were willing for the *"even if He does not"* in verse 18." One can almost hear another man in the Old Testament, whose faith soared in the heights of power and authority – in the midst of devastating desolation and piercing pain and what seemed like eternal darkness, he was able to cry out "though He slay me yet will I trust Him." These three men boldly

declared, "Our God is able, but even if He does not rescue us, we will still trust Him." This is the ultimate test of a full surrender to God. It is also the climactic test of faith. It reveals a strong trust that God is good and that though the way may seem dark and destructive for the moment, yet in God's perfect will there is always the hope of the dawn of a triumphant day. It is the unshakable belief that in all seemingly difficult circumstances, God does all things well.

This posture, conviction or confession rests upon three foundational truths They are truths which find their source in the heart. They are personal as apposed to being impersonal. Their conviction was rooted in their hearts. Their vibrant confession was a result of what they knew to be true. The first is that

God is real

He is real in that He is the living God.. Daniel 3:17. note their conviction. "The God we serve is...." He is the God of the present tense. They assumed the reality of their God. They never doubted it. They declared Him to be alive. "The God we serve is...." He is the here and now God. The ever present God. He supersedes the boundaries of time and transcends the limits of place. He is the God who sits upon an eternal throne. No man created Him. So why give in into the temptation to change

their allegiance from the God who is, to a created gold image made by human hands. God was real to these three men. They were convinced of this. They were also convinced that,

God is able.

Daniel 3:17. "Our God is able to save us from it, and He will rescue us from your hand O king...." That is a statement of truth. Regardless of what the will of God was for them in this situation, the God they served was able to save them. They were in no doubt of that. This confession was the response to the arrogant question of the king in verse 15. "What God will be able to rescue you from hand...?" Part of the reply from these three men was "...the God we serve is able to save us and rescue us." They firmly stood on the power and ability of God to rescue them from the burning fiery furnace. They were convinced of this. They were also convinced that,

God is personal

Daniel 3:17. note what they said, "...the God we serve is able." The King James translation has it "our God...is able." There is the sense of a personal relationship here. They were conscious of the presence of God in the events of their lives. "the God we serve will save us. He will rescue us." There was a God consciousness in these three men which was the reinforcing power of their courage. Their awareness

of God over shadowed the deep darkness surrounding them and they were able to look beyond the furious fire of their trial to the delivering presence of God. The threats of the king, the heat of the fire could not destroy their faith. It was a faith that defied defeat, dispelled the doubts and drove out the darkness. The great saint Savonarola about to die said to his enemies, "They may kill me if they please, but they will never tear the living Christ from my heart." King David wrote "the Lord is the strength of my life." Not my position as king of Israel, not my wealth and certainly not my authority. The "Lord is the strength of my life." These then are the foundations upon which our faith can stand strong in adversity. God is real - God is able - God is personal. These three men testified to the truth of it. This dynamic faith resulted in,

THE TRIUMPH OF THEIR FAITH.

Daniel 3:25. The refusal of the three men to bow to the gold image landed them in the fire. And when the king looked into the fire he asked his advisors "wasn't it three men that we tied up and threw into the fire, and they replied certainly. The king said look! I see four men walking around in the fire unbound and unharmed, and the fourth is like unto the son of the gods. The great faith chapter of Hebrews(Ch. 11:34). The writer tells us that by "faith they

quenched the fury of the flames." Note that did not quench the flames, but rather their faith nullified the destructive power of those flames. They did not avoid the fire itself, but their faith quenched the destructive impact of the fiery furnace. There is some significant symbolism in this incident which has something to tell us in our pain or adversity. Firstly will you note

the freedom they experienced in the fire.

Daniel 3:25. To exacerbate Two things happened before they were thrown into the fire. i. The fire was heated seven times hotter than was previously intended. ii. Their feet hands and feet were firmly tied but when the king looked into the furnace, he saw them walking about unbound and unharmed. These men believed that God would rescue them from the fire. But in this context that was not God's way or will for them. He had higher purpose designed for them. God did not save them from the fire. He saved them in the fire. The Bible says that through their faith in the Almighty God they quench the power, the violence and the malignant influence of the flames. Furthermore the fire burned their chains not God's servants. God allows trials to come our way not for our destruction but for our redemption. He takes us through the fires of adversity as a refining



and maturation process. It is not a comfortable process but it cleansing process. It is certainly is not a relaxing process, however it is a refining process. The Apostle Peter admits this to this. He tells us"....though for a little while you may be distressed by trials and suffer temptation. So that the genuineness of your faith maybe tested, which is infinitely more precious than the perishable gold which is tested and purified by fire." Faith is tested to prove that it is genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. To resist the fires of adversity when God allows them to come our things. Is to miss the refining purifying process that the fiery trial can bring to our lives. In other words we will miss the purpose and benefit which God intends for us through them. These three men experienced freedom in the fire and when they were taken out of the fire they were unharmed and the smell of the fire was not on them. It is also important that we notice

the fellowship they enjoyed.

Daniel 3:25. As the King looked into the fire, he could not believe what he saw. I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound, unharmed and the fourth man is like unto the Son of the gods. God identified Himself with these three men in such a way that He fellowshiped with them in the fire. The key

to this fellowship was their faith. Their complete trust in the faithfulness and goodness of God. The Child of God who exercises faith God, will have the reinforcing energizing fortifying presence of God with them in the trials of life. The words of the Lord through the Prophet Isaiah come with force to us. "when you pass through water I will be with you, and through the rivers and they shall not sweep over you and when you walk through the fire you shall not be burned and the flame will not set you ablaze."