

Faith's Trial

Our lives as believers in Christ are definitely full and rarely boring. But there may be times when our faith in Christ leads to situations that really aren't pleasant, in that they bring us into conflict with those around us. It is those times that show us whether our faith is real, and if we truly believe in the God of the Bible. Daniel 3 tells us of one of those times in the lives of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Nebuchadnezzar wanted to erect a golden statue and have everyone bow before it (Daniel 3:1-12). He wanted to show that "his" empire would never end. So right away, these three faithful men had to answer the questions: "Over whom does God reign? Whose god is God? Will we bow before God or rebel before God?" Instead of being rewarded for their refusal to serve and worship the golden image, these men are faced with a death threat (Daniel 3:15). They are accused of treason and agitation. Their faith was examined.

"Do this or else!" was the king's command. Many times we aren't faced with such a stark situation. It isn't necessarily the great things, but it is the little ways of pressuring believers to disobey the Scriptures, that we deal with from time to time. Right now it is the pressure to conform to the culture—even church culture—that approves of lifestyles manifestly opposed to God. We are called on to compromise the Gospel—that Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried, and arose the third day to justify sinners in actual danger of hell. We are being pressured to bow before the idols of this day. Peers, fellow employees, employers, teachers, even family members may have a hand in trying to get us to compromise. If that doesn't work, then maybe the "cancel culture" will silence our praise to the One True God.

These three men gave solid evidence of their faith. There would be no ambiguity or question, no hesitation or debate, no rationalizations.

"Our God will deliver us from the furnace and from your hand," they directly told the king. They knew God was in control of the circumstances. Their greatest amount of faith likely wasn't standing up before the king and declaring God's care, but in saying, "But if not, we still aren't going to bow down."

Consider that little phrase—"But if not."

We want our prayers answered--but if not!

We want long life and good health--but if not!

We want our children to prosper--but if not!

We want to see miracles happen--but if not!

We want our country safe and happy--but if not!

If God says no to your cherished dreams and hopes, will you still trust Him? If God says, no, to your future plans, will you still serve Him? If God says no when through your tears you pray for those you love, will you still follow Him?

These three men knew God was able to deliver them, and we need a faith that knows that God is able, but a faith that also realizes that our life is subject to God's will and we leave it all in His hands. That takes great faith. Happily, these men were vindicated (Daniel 3:19-30). God brought about a miraculous deliverance. God showed His approval of the stand before the king.

James Montgomery Boice wrote, "Let us stand for the right and do it....Let us stand with unbowed heads and rigid backbones before the golden statues of our godless, materialistic culture. Let us declare that there is a God to be served and a race to be won."