

youthESource Bible Study

Faith Under Fire: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego

by Bo Chapman

Opening Questions & Thoughts:

What are some activities that you or your friends engage in that you don't particularly like or agree with but you/they do it because you/they are trying to "keep up with the Joneses," to stay in a relationship, to maintain your circle of friends, to get noticed/rewarded at work, etc.?

What would be the reaction of others if you decided that you weren't going to be a part of those activities any longer because it goes against your faith?

In the world in which we live, our society and culture dictates what is normal and acceptable. The problem is that most of these standards and requirements are in opposition to what it is that God desires for His people. Just take a quick look at what's on TV, in magazines or what's playing on the radio or at the movie theater to see what the world considers to be appropriate, normal, popular and so forth and then compare it to God's Word. It is easy to see very quickly that the two sides are at odds.

Now, think about how those who stand up for God's Word and refuse to succumb to the world are treated. Would you agree that usually they are ridiculed, shunned, marginalized or ignored? Even so, God has called us to be different than the world and to put our trust in Him. We are to be people of faith trusting that God has a plan, is in control and knows what is right and true. But not only that, we are to put that faith into action by living out what we confess and believe.

That is no easy task, but we are not the first to wrestle with living out our faith within the context of a world that is hostile towards our God. Check out the following passages to get a great example of this battle.

In the Word:

Read Daniel 3:8-15.

What is King Nebuchadnezzar telling Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego that they have to do?

What will be the result if they refuse?

Now be honest, what would most people do in this situation?

Yes, most people would bow to the request of the King to save their life. Yet, these three men were so focused on being faithful to their God that they weren't going to compromise that part of their nature. They were willing to remain faithful even if it cost them their lives.

Listen to how they respond to King Nebuchadnezzar.

Read Daniel 3:16-18.

Wow! What a statement. These three men were willing to give up their lives for what is right. That is a powerful thought. We, too, are asked to make a stand for what we believe and these beliefs are highlighted in both the things we say and the things we do.

Chances are that you probably won't be forced to decide between your life or deciding to follow God's command, but the issues that were noted earlier in the Questions & Thoughts section are very real. In making a conscious effort to strive to be faithful in living the life God has called us to will most likely have some painful pushback and consequences in this world.

So what are some practical steps to prepare and strengthen Christians as they step out into a world that is

going to attack them, especially if they are striving to be faithful to what they believe?

Consider this:

- Realize that there will be a constant struggle for your heart and mind every day. Read Ephesians 6:12.
- Rest in the promise that God is completely in control, that He loves you and that He has the very best planned for you. Read Jeremiah 29:11-13 & Deuteronomy 31:6
- Make time to consistently pray for yourselves and others. There is power in prayer. Read James 5:16
- Be strengthened by the fact that you are not alone in these struggles. Others are going through some of the same battles as you and if you can face them together it can serve to encourage all those involved. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego faced the fire together and as verse 25 mentions, Christ joined them as well. Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 & John 13:34-35.
- Remember that you will fall short and make mistakes. But, it is within those shortcomings that we are reminded of some of the great promises and reassurances of our Lord and Savior. There is forgiveness, love, renewal and hope that comes only from Him. Read Titus 3:4-8.

Closing Thoughts:

The world is a difficult place to live and the pressure is ever mounting on the lives of people to conform to the patterns of this world. God is asking for something different from His children, which isn't always easy because of the backlash that Christians receive from others when they stand up for their faith.

May the accounts of those who have gone before us serve to strengthen our faith, as well as the blessing of being able to walk with other brothers and sisters through the trials of this life. Most of all, may we draw closer and closer to our wonderful Lord and Savior who cares deeply for each of us and is there with us each step of the way.

In John 16:33 Jesus says, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." Amen.

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