

## Faith That Will Not Be Shaken

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Scripture: Daniel 3:13-18 and Psalm 62:5-8

### Daniel 3:13-18

<sup>13</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought in; so they brought those men before the king. <sup>14</sup> Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods and you do not worship the golden statue that I have set up? <sup>15</sup> Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble to fall down and worship the statue that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire, and who is the god that will deliver you out of my hands?”

<sup>16</sup> Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to present a defense to you in this matter. <sup>17</sup> If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king, let him deliver us. <sup>18</sup> But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up.”

### Psalm 62:5-8

<sup>5</sup> For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him. <sup>6</sup> He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. <sup>7</sup> On God rests my deliverance and my honor; my mighty rock, my refuge is in God. <sup>8</sup> Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.

It was around 600 BC when Judah was conquered by Babylon. In the book Daniel, we are told that King Nebuchadnezzar selected the best men to be in his service for every matter of wisdom and knowledge. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were the four men groomed and trained for three years before entering the king’s service. They were the brightest and best of all who were selected to go into training and testing.

But before they were trained, their names were changed: Daniel was given the name Belteshazzar; Hananiah, Shadrach; Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego. (Daniel 3:7)

Though in some cases, God grants certain people new names as an honorable and blessed act. In this case, in conquering another nation and people, part of the assimilation process was to remove as much of the other nation’s culture so they will become more like the conquering nation.

When in high school I used to go to work with my mom, the elderly owner of the store, who was Korean, once spoke a language that I could not understand. I asked my mom why she was speaking a different language, other than Korean. My mom sat me down and explained that Korea was once occupied by another country, and the Korean people were forced to change their names and even the very language they spoke.

So, it was as well when King Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah and took back to Babylonia the wealth and some of the most promising people from the royal family and nobility of the people of Israel.

In the same way, those who were conquered were told to basically erase and forget everything that made them who they were so that they would be fully in King's service.

In the matter of being groomed for the king's service, these four men did as they were told as they took on their new names. However, they refused to bow down to an idol even though they knew it would cost them their lives.

They remembered the first two of the Ten Commandments: "Thou shall have no other gods before me" and "Thou shall not make for yourself an idol...not bow[ing] to them or worship[ping] them..." (Deuteronomy 5:7-9)

Three of them, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were put to the test and displayed such faith that would not be shaken, even when they were ruled and threatened by such a ruthless, irrational, and unforgiving king. Their faith would not be shaken when everything seemed to be stripped from them, even their very identities. And their faith would not be shaken when their uncompromising love and commitment to God brought about painful consequences and even death.

All three stuck together through the journey of loss, even to the point of not even being able to call each other by the very names they were given at birth. And though they knew their nation had been unfaithful to God and thus handed over to their enemies, they trusted in God for their very lives in every circumstance.

We can learn from this kind of faith. When we are dealt a bad blow in life and shaken to our core, we are to find the unshakable power God. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego could have fallen into the temptation of blaming God and everyone who contributed to their problems. They could have lost their faith in God. However, they endured the forced changes in their lives, the forced work, and the forced life of serving the very king that conquered their land and people.

Their faith remained anchored because they knew and believed that everything they did in life was done for God. And so, without compromising their love and relationship with God, they did what was demanded and required. It showed more submissiveness and obedience to God than to King Nebuchadnezzar. Their faith was unshakable because they knew who they were living for.

Sometimes things go wrong in our lives, within ourselves, among family, between friends, at work, or even among strangers that we have bad encounters with. You may wonder how in the world you got into such a situation and how in the world you are going to get out. You may

pray and ask God for help. But the faith that is unshakable is one that acts in obedience and love to God in the face of such trials.

If you want to talk about battles in your life, the spiritual battle is one we fight regularly, the fight that Satan wishes you will lose and stop praying, stop caring, stop loving, stop serving, and stop doing and being what God has created you to be and called you to do.

When everything seems to be going wrong, when people misinterpret your actions and even speak against you, and when you feel like giving up, it is the faith you have in God, the very faith that God has planted within you, that must be re-ignited so that your actions are not to prove people wrong and to make your case and win, but rather to do everything for the One who matters most. If it is God you serve first, then you will live and work without being distracted, deterred, discouraged because you remember the purpose of your life and faith in God.

Whether it is taking care of yourself, a child, family, parent or if it taking care of something like a business, your faith in God makes all the difference in the world. That is where faith in God comes into play.

Of course, everything from our abilities to our material and financial resources are incredibly important. We must value our God-given gifts and the abilities to work, play, create, and invest...investing in life and the lives of others.

However, our faith in God will be shaken if those things come before him in our lives.

We can learn from these three men of faith that even when you lose everything, even the sense of who you are, you can actually even thrive rather than just survive when going through the most difficult time of life.

Most liberating and empowering is when you no longer let fear be the main or overpowering motivating factor in your life.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not only incredibly well-educated, wise beyond their years, of great health physically and of great strength emotionally and mentally, they were also incredibly strong spiritually.

This is not accomplished by a mere decision of the mind. It is accomplished by the dedication of one's entire life to God and his love and saving grace.

If you think about the greatest athletes in the world, and you ask them how they overcome the pressures and fears of losing or failure, you will find the various responses quite insightful. Some will honestly say that they do not think about such fears when they are preparing and performing. When asked if they were afraid, they would say something like, "If I were really afraid of failure, then I would not have begun in the first place."

This does not mean we are absolutely fearless as Christians. There would be no such thing as courage and bravery if fear were not a factor; for courage is doing what we know we must do, in light of our fears.

However, when it comes to faith in God, having a faith that will not be shaken is about believing that God is the Creator, Redeemer, Protector, and Savior of your very soul.

Of course Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had some fears of standing up to King Nebuchadnezzar, including the fear of actually burning to death in the furnace heated.

Nevertheless, their faith would not be shaken, and they acted fearlessly as they replied confidently to who God was.

There may be times when you need to defend your character, your reputation, and even your actions. But more importantly is when you choose not to do so when you know who it is that knows, defends and protects you. Such faith in God allows you to walk through any furnace in life, whether they are raging fires from within yourself or flames that come from those you least expect, or torches of fire from those you do expect them to come from.

These three men of faith acted with respect, with honor, with self-control, and with godliness because they were not afraid of what people could do to them or because they were insecure in one way or another. They knew their lives were in the hands of God, the God who not only handles their lives on earth but their very souls when their lives on earth were finished.

The very faith these men had is the very faith we can also have. We can have such faith that will not be shaken when we trust in God even when it seems we've lost everything, when it seems like it is hard to figure out who we are or who are supposed to be, and when we walk through the flames of persecution for doing what is right and loving in the sight of God.

Let us not forget one of the main reasons for why we are here on earth. It is so that through our lives, God can use us to bring those who have yet to trust in him to a right and purposeful relationship with him.

You see, though King Nebuchadnezzar was ruthless and insane, God worked in the lives of others, especially through the lives of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. When God saved them from the fiery furnace, God did something in the king.

Some would say King Nebuchadnezzar should have been dealt severely for what he did to those three men of faith and all those who he conquered and killed.

This is the difference between people of faith and people of fear. Jesus Christ was the ultimate example of love, for he is God and God is love. How do we deal with those who treat others poorly, who cause others pain, who do what seems to be so ungodly and cruel? We love them

with the love of God, praying that they will come to know such saving and life-giving faith in Christ. This of course does not turn a blind eye to injustices that need to be made right, consequences that cannot be simply be brushed under the rug, or the outcry of what is wrong with the pursuit of what is good and right.

No doubt it is incredibly frustrating when it seems we are powerless at times. Yet we cannot lose our ultimate faith or hope that is placed in God, not placed in ourselves or others. In this world where we can easily become cynical, let us have such faith that trust in God to do the work that none of us can do nor imagine can be accomplished.

It is recorded in Daniel, chapter 4 that King Nebuchadnezzar said:

“At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever.

His dominion is an eternal dominion;  
his kingdom endures from generation to generation.”

“All the peoples of the earth  
are regarded as nothing.  
He does as he pleases  
with the powers of heaven  
and the peoples of the earth.  
No one can hold back his hand  
or say to him: ‘What have you done?’”

“At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.”

He was transformed in mind, heart, and spirit; something only God could do.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, my friends, this is the greatest joy found in heaven and on earth; when one who was lost is found. In the Bible it says they have a party in heaven every time someone is found in Christ. This joy, the very reason Christ came to earth and suffered, died, and rose again was so we would not only know of such saving grace for ourselves, but also in knowing the joy of being Christ’s hands and feet in bringing others to such saving knowledge and faith in Jesus Christ.

It is with such faith in God that cannot be shaken so that we are able to pray as hard we pray, worship as we joyfully worship, serve as we can faithfully serve, give as we can generously give, and live as we can fully live.

May you choose today and each day to have such faith in God that will not be shaken, and that God can use to move and draw others to the love and purpose of God. Amen.

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This week's prayer requests:

1. Pray for Lori Giedlin's friend, Melissa, who has been diagnosed with breast cancer and will be having chemo and radiation.
2. Lindsay Metzger asks for prayers for her nephew and Gary Ross's grandson, Jacob Kahn. Jacob was diagnosed with cancer. Pray as he has treatments at Mott's Children Hospital and that he beat this. Jacob is 17 and in his senior year of school.
3. Please Carolyn Trainor, Kim Bodenmiller's mother, in your prayers. She's been hospitalized with another acute gout attack in her knee. Prayers that it with the doctors care that Carolyn will be better soon.