

## Fearless: No Testing Please — Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego

Faith that's tested is faith that can be trusted. In what area of life are you most tempted to follow people's expectations instead of God's? There is a difference between believing in God and believing God. What are you "believing God" for?



**Daniel 3:13-15** So these men were brought before the king, and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?"

### Reflections

I believe this is challenging time and place to be a Christian. In an age where tolerance means allowing practically anything, Christians still come under attack for believing the truth of the Gospel and living in the love of God. Here in Howard County you are one of maybe 5% of residents who attend worship regularly, one of maybe 5% who work on living your faith. We are a minority in today's society which seems to be actively working against Christians. Public discussion of Christian beliefs is discouraged and mocked, being labeled inflexible, intolerant and inhospitable.

During the exile in Babylon the Israelites were less than 5% and also faced an active society that wanted to change them and make them think like the rest of the Babylonians, worship their gods and renounce their own God. This was a tough place, they'd throw you into a fiery furnace if you didn't bow down to the statue of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had built. Everyone had to follow the king's decrees.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, 3 men from Israel, living in Babylon during the exile, faced a persecution that was certainly far worse than what we can imagine. If we don't bow down to a society that seeks to eliminate our faith from public discussion we are ignored,

or made fun of. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego faced a horrible death if they refused. While we all are glad we don't live in those days, we would all likely agree that society does frequently attempt to force Christians to bow down to the secular world at the expense of our faith. Can we learn from these early men of faith?

Verses 1-15, today's lesson, set up the situation that our three men of faith are tested by, but read on, verses 16-18 are among the most powerful verses you'll read:

*<sup>16</sup> Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. <sup>17</sup> If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. <sup>18</sup> But even 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."*

Here are men whose faith is so full that they can face a mighty and terrible king and simply tell him he is irrelevant to them in matters of their belief in God. For these men of faith, Nebuchadnezzar is not even worthy of offering a defense for their faith! Every person around this king is always bowing and acquiescing to his whims, but these men of God

have such a faith that they do not need to reply to his threats and commands.

Imagine being able to say today, 'I am God's child; I serve him and love him only. Whatever is God's will for me is what I look forward to.' And then imagine really being able to say this when backed into a corner because of your love for God. Here's the good news for today: if you can't see yourself saying this today, you can grow in your faith to be able to do so! Jesus Christ has given us this gift in his death and resurrection! Now is the time to begin living in the love of Christ and growing in your love and devotion to our God who loves us all without reservation!

In a time when society has told us we can have it all, we deserve to have it all and now we see how that isn't the truth. The Gospel of God's love through Jesus Christ is a truth that is as true for us as it was for Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

Well, maybe it isn't so challenging to live in Howard County in the 21<sup>st</sup> century after all. As we work to grow in our faith, reading our Bible, being in small groups, worshipping together and praying to God, I hope we can remember these 3 men of God and how their faith was tested and how they lived joyfully in that faith. Oh, do finish reading Chapter 3, it is a wonderful story of the power of God!

—Karl Berland

## Readings

### Sunday, January 18

**Daniel 3:1-15** How well do you stand up to the 'astrologers' (Daniel 3: 8, NIH) who judge you? How can you be strengthened to face them?

### Monday, January 19

**Daniel 3:6** Putting your faith to the fire is a test we hope we don't face. In what ways can you work on preparing yourself for the most severe tests of your faith that you might face?

### Tuesday, January 20

**Job 1** Many of us are hurting right now due to the economy and world situation. It is in times when we've had it good, then lose it all, that our faith is tested. Job lost it all, yet remains faithful. How would the example of Job help you with the challenges you face today?

### Wednesday, January 21

**Exodus 20:1:8** God gave Moses the commandments. The first commandments establish a relationship we are to have with God, placing our faith in Him above everything else. As you work through the challenges of your life, how can God's word and His establishing a personal relationship with you help you, guide you and support you?

### Thursday, January 22

**Luke 4:1-13** Jesus was tempted by the devil. The devil tempts Jesus with worldly things. We are tempted with worldly things daily. How does Jesus teach us what is right and keep us faithful?

### Friday, January 23

**Acts 7:54-60** (Stoning of Stephen) Stephen had the same faith as Shadrach, Meshach and Abendnego, but God choose not to spare him. Yet Stephen praised God and asked forgiveness for those who killed him. How will you grow in your faith to ask forgiveness of those who would harm you for your faith?

### Saturday, January 24

**1 Peter 4:12-19** Peter teaches us to find God's glory when we suffer for His name. How can Peter's teachings help you grow in your faith as you face your daily struggles as a Christian?

***Don't have a Bible? Access these scriptures at [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com).***