

Ignite Your Faith!  
Pt 2: Fiery Furnace  
Daniel 3

The Jewish nation of Israel had been invaded and defeated by the Babylonians around 586 BC. As was the custom, many of them were carried away, back to Babylon as captives and slaves. While there, many interesting things happen, one of which we are going to look at this morning.

The "fire story" we are looking at this week involves the King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, and three Jewish young men who had been carried away as captives into Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

Daniel 3:13-17

13 Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king,

14 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?

15 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?"

16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter.

17 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.

The first thing I want to point out is found in verse 17. The three say, "God will save us...God will rescue us..." That is what I call unflinching faith!

1. Unflinching faith.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego said, "God will deliver us...."

Even though their very lives are threatened, their faith is not shaken. And not just death, but a very torturous death. Being burned alive is a horrible way to go. But they don't flinch in the face of death.

The Apostle John had the same type of unflinching faith. John is the one who wrote the incredible Book of Revelation, the last book in your Bible.

As most of you know, John was on the Island of Patmos when he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write the Revelation.

John was on an island. Doesn't that sound great!

What do you think of when you think of an Island?

The Bahamas, Maui, Caribbean...?

Do you think: snorkeling...laying on the beach...drinks with funny little umbrellas in them...music.

You may be thinking John is enjoying the good life here.

WRONG!

Think Alcatraz! Think Riker's Island. Think Devil's Island.

The Island of Patmos was a prison colony.

More than that, Patmos was a death camp for many first century Christians.

And why, you ask, is John here. Take a look at one of his opening comments:

Revelation 1:9 "I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus."

He says, "...because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus." In other words, because he's been preaching and teaching about God and Jesus!

Here he is imprisoned and facing the possibility of death because of his faith, and yet his faith doesn't die.  
In the midst of all this: He's still praising God!  
He's not cursing God, he's not questioning God, he's not blaming God, he's not whining to God.  
He's praising God!

Regardless of the circumstances. Regardless of how tough things got.

His faith was tested and it was found to be solid. Like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego  
He had unflinching faith!

Unflinching faith doesn't falter, even when facing death!

Some of you have already had your faith confronted by death. And your faith sustained you.  
-Perhaps a love one has passed on. Maybe someone who you felt was way too young to die. It didn't seem right, it didn't seem fair, it didn't make sense. But it happened. And you are here worshiping the Lord today. Your faith was stretched, it was challenged, but it didn't falter.  
-Perhaps you've had a life threatening illness. Perhaps you yourself are right now going through the "valley of the shadow of death." And you are still here, worshiping the Lord! Your faith hasn't faltered.

That doesn't mean you don't have questions. It doesn't mean you have all the answers.  
After the questions, after the anger, after the grief.....faith remains.  
When all is said and done, unflinching faith doesn't falter.

Let's change gears here. Let me give you a literature quiz.  
Where is this sentence from?  
"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times."  
You guessed it. Charles Dickens' "A Tale of Two Cities."

In the absolute WORST of times, God has a habit of doing the BEST of things.  
John 11:25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will LIVE, even though he DIES."

Followers of Jesus Christ who have unflinching faith believe that even in the worst of circumstances, the Lord will be there for them

The Apostle John was in the midst of what most would consider the worst of times.  
But he still believed the best about Jesus.  
The Apostle John had unflinching faith!  
Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had unflinching faith.

But they also had something else. They had unconditional loyalty

## 2. Unconditional loyalty

For those of you who are familiar with this story here in Daniel 3, what would you say is the highlight of the story?

Most people say that when the three walked out of the furnace, that was the highlight.

But I don't think so.

As incredible as that moment was, as miraculous as that was, as awesome as that was.....I think there is something even more profound.

See if you can spot it as we continue the story:

Daniel 3:17-20

17 "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.

18 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."

19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual  
20 and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace.

Their faith was so profound that they believed without hesitation that God could deliver them from this death by fire. They had unfailing faith.

But they had something else equally profound.

They had unconditional loyalty.

Yes, God could work a miracle and deliver them. BUT IF NOT: They were willing to die for what they believed in!

You don't get much more loyal than that. That's unconditional loyalty.

I think the highlight of the whole story, the most incredible thing of the whole story, is found in the opening words of verse 18:

Daniel 3:18 "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."

You see, we want the God who does the miracle for us. We want the God who heals our child or saves our marriage or gets us a job or a God who pays our bills.

And God can certainly do any of those things and much, much more, IF He so chooses.

But what happens to your faith when God doesn't.

What happens...When your child dies....When your spouse dies....When your best friend dies?

What happens when God doesn't heal you, or one of your loved ones?

When you have poured out your heart, when you have pleaded with God, and you still don't get the answer you were looking for.....what then?

What happens to your faith? What does it do to your relationship with God?

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.....said, "But even if He does not....."

Unconditional loyalty doesn't falter, even when God says, "no."

You see, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were loyal to the Lord, regardless.

They didn't have to have the miracle.

They didn't have to be delivered from the fire.

There were no conditions attached.

They were blindly loyal to the Lord. They said, "But even if He does not....."

They had unconditional loyalty.

Do you remember from the Old Testament that guy named Job and the series of tragedies that befell him? Do you understand how profound a statement Job made when he said,  
Job 13:15 "Though He slay me, yet will I hope in Him."

In the absolute worst of times, Job had unconditional loyalty.

He proclaims that even in the absolute worst case scenario, he would still be loyal.

Some of you have experienced the worst of times.

If not physically, perhaps emotionally, or financially, or relationally, or spiritually.

Those on fire for the Lord, those mature in the Lord, those who walk daily with the Lord.....have unconditional loyalty to the Lord.

Let me tell you about a man named Jim Elliot.

Jim Elliot was a missionary who had started a work in Ecuador in 1952. He and his team were doing work with the Auca native tribe. The Aucas had never had friendly contact with people outside of their

own group. Jim and his companions made contact with them by dropping gifts from an airplane. Eventually they met a few of the natives. They decided to set up a base camp in the jungle near the tribe's community. Unfortunately, Jim and four others were murdered by the tribe they were trying to minister to.

But here's how that story ties in with our discussion this morning. Jim and all four of the others each carried a gun with them. If the tribe turned out to be hostile, they hoped the sight of the guns would scare them off. If not, then they hoped to shoot the guns into the air to scare off any attackers. However, they decided that under no circumstance would they shot any tribe member. Even if they were being attacked. Even if it cost them their life. They just felt that if missionaries came in and shot tribesmen, even in self defense, no one would ever have the opportunity of sharing Jesus Christ with the tribe from then on. They believed that leading this tribe to Christ was more important than their own lives. They believed that this is what the Lord had called them to.

And that's exactly what happened. They were attacked. They had the guns. They did not use the guns to defend themselves. And they were all killed.

That, my friends, is unconditional loyalty. "Though He slay me, yet will I hope in Him."

A few years earlier Jim Elliot had written in his journal, "He is no fool who gives up that which he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."

Unconditional loyalty. Loyalty regardless of the consequences. Regardless of the cost. Regardless of the sacrifices. Regardless of the circumstances or situations. Through thick and thin. Always loyal.

Jim Elliot had it.

Job had it.

The Apostle John had it.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had it.

Unconditional loyalty.

And because of that, they also had an undeniable testimony.

### 3. Undeniable testimony.

We've heard the sayings:  
"Talk is cheap." "Actions speak louder than words." "I'll believe it when I see it."

It's good to tell people about your faith.

It's even better to let people see your faith in action.

Is your faith seen in the way you treat people, in the words that you use, in your conduct during the week, in your business dealings.....

Are you a living testimony?

Some people's lives are so exemplary, that they have an undeniable testimony.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had that kind of testimony.

Check out Nebuchadnezzar's response. This is exciting!

Daniel 3:24-28

24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, "Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?" They replied, "Certainly, O king."

25 He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods."

26 Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire,

27 and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them.

28 Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has

sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.

Look at verse 25. Nebuchadnezzar said, "LOOK!"

It was undeniable that a miracle had occurred!

It was undeniable that God is a great God!

It was undeniable that God is a powerful God!

It was undeniable that God is a God of salvation!

It was undeniable that God is deserving of worship!

Nebuchadnezzar said, "LOOK!"

Now look at verse 28, Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego."

Nebuchadnezzar the persecutor, Nebuchadnezzar the punish-er, became Nebuchadnezzar the praiser! Nebuchadnezzar gave a praise, a testimony, about God. Based upon the undeniable testimony of the other three.

It's only natural that when you see a miracle you're going to praise God!

And it's only natural that when you've had an encounter with God, you're going to tell others about it, as Nebuchadnezzar did.

He then, had his own undeniable testimony. All he did was tell people what he had experienced.

Now get this: People may be able to question and debate your theology, but they can't debate your relationship with Jesus Christ.

If you are a Christian, if you have received Jesus Christ as your Lord and savior, you have an undeniable testimony. All you've got to do is tell people what Jesus means to you!

But then again, actions speak louder than words.

So, let your actions show people what the Lord is doing in your life.

This is what Jesus was getting at when He said:

John 15:8 (Jesus said) "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, SHOWING yourselves to be my disciples."

Your actions are a big part of your testimony.

Matthew 5:16 (Jesus said) "In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

Evaluate yourself. Look over this last week.

Are your actions an undeniable testimony of the Lord's presence in your life.

The first and most important testimony you can give is to make a public proclamation of your love and devotion of Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.