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The Story

A Matter of Faith

Pt 1: Uncompromising Faith

This morning we are going to look at two of the more well known stories in the Old Testament. The first is the story of three young men named Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They are with the nation of Israel which had been carried away into captivity in Babylon.

As you know, these three Jewish young men got into trouble because they would not worship the false gods and idols of their oppressors. Because of that, they were thrown into a furnace.

Daniel 3:14-18

14 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.

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."

Because they refused to worship an idol, nor would they serve any of the false gods of Babylon, they were thrown into the fiery furnace. Miraculously, they survived!

Daniel 3:26-27

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.

Miraculously, they survived the furnace! To this day, children in Sunday School classes sing songs about Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and their incredible miracle.

The second story I want us to look at is the story of Daniel in the Lion's Den. Like his three friends, Daniel got into trouble because of worshiping God. However, the first three got into trouble because they WOULD NOT worship, Daniel got into trouble because he DID worship!

Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego got into trouble because they did not worship a false God. Daniel got into trouble because he did worship the one true God.

Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego got into trouble because they obeyed the Ten Commandments which prohibits the worship of false gods or man made idols. Meanwhile, Daniel got in trouble because he DID worship God. He obeyed the Ten Commandments which instruct us to worship the one true God.

As a side note, this is not just an Old Testament Commandment. Jesus taught this same truth:

Luke 4:8 Jesus answered, "Worship the Lord your God and serve him only."

Old and New Testament, we are forbidden to worship false Gods, we are commanded to worship the one true God.

Daniel got into trouble because of his uncompromising commitment to worshipping God:

Daniel 6:9-12

9 So King Darius put the decree in writing.

10 Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.

11 Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help.

12 So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree: "Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or man except to you, O king, would be thrown into the lions' den?" The king answered, "The decree stands — in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed."

Daniel prayed to God, which was against the decree, and was thrown into a den or pit of lions. He is being punished because he worshiped God. Miraculously, he survived!

Daniel 6:22-23

22 My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king."

23 The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego had uncompromising faith!  
Daniel had uncompromising faith! What about you?

Let's take a look at their faith and see if there are some things we can learn and apply to our lives which will help to strengthen our faith.

### 1. No succumbing to threats.

When you have unconditional faith, you don't succumb to threats about your faith. You aren't intimidated into compromise. You aren't bullied into unbelief.

Uncompromising faith means you remain steadfast. It means you cannot be moved away from your faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. At any cost!

Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego would not succumb to the threats of the King. Their lives were threatened, but look how they responded:

Daniel 3:16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter."

They won't succumb to threats!  
They will not worship other gods. They will not worship idols. End of discussion!

Their attitude was, "In regards to worship, we don't answer to you, we don't answer to the world, we answer to God! We cannot be threatened into disobedience."

Three chapters later, Daniel makes a similar decision. The king issued a decree that stated that anyone who prayed to God would be thrown into a den of lions. Look at how Daniel responded:

Daniel 6:10 "Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before."

Three times a day he HAD prayed to God and three times a day he CONTINUED to pray to God.

Uncompromising faith means you remain steadfast.

Daniel would not succumb to threats. What about your faith?

I doubt that your life has ever been threatened because of your faith.

But have you been intimidated in other ways?

Do you fear being laughed at or ridiculed? Are you afraid someone will poke fun at you?

Do you fear that your faith might cause you to not blend in with the crowd?

Do you fear that someone might not accept you if they knew you are a Christian?

Do you hide your faith when you feel threatened?

You don't need to be afraid!

2 Timothy 1:7 “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”

Don't succumb to threats, of any kind. Don't worry so much about what others think. Worry more about what God thinks! Look at the attitude of the Apostles:

Acts 5:29 “We must obey God rather than man....”

The Apostle Peter was threatened by the High Priest and the Sanhedrin, he was flogged and ordered to stop talking about Jesus.

His response? “We'll obey God, not you.”

Uncompromising faith means you don't succumb to threats, of any kind. It means you will live for Jesus, you will speak out about Jesus, you will be faithful to Jesus no matter what anyone else thinks, says or does. What else does it mean?

2. No denying reality.

Having unconditional faith doesn't mean you live in a fantasy world. It doesn't mean that you aren't aware of the tragedies in the world, the sickness, the illnesses and diseases, the wars, the crime, the prejudices and bigotry, the evil..... It doesn't mean that you are a pollyanna who lives in some make-believe utopia.

It means that your faith exists in the midst of the realities of the world. And that reality includes consequences of having faith.

Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego certainly understood that:

Daniel 3:17 “If we are thrown into the furnace....”

They didn't pretend there was no danger.  
They didn't ignore the realities that existed around them.  
They didn't deny reality. And yet their faith was uncompromised!

The reality of life is, tragedies DO happen, even to Christians. We need a faith that can stand up to reality.

Daniel 3:17 “....God is able to save us...”

The key word there is “able.”  
First of all, of course He is able, He is God! He can and oftentimes does, perform miracles.

But notice they said He is able. He CAN do it, but the choice is His.  
- Never presume to tell God what to do!

We don't presume to tell God what to do - We yield to His will.

So, let me ask you this question: How do you respond when God says no. How do you respond when God doesn't answer your prayer the way you wanted Him to answer your prayer? How do you respond when God doesn't heal you or your loved one?

Will you still love Him? Will you still serve Him? Will you still worship Him? Will you still trust Him?

Will you have faith similar to a man named Job, in the Old Testament. After losing absolutely everything in his life, all his possessions, even his entire family, he made this incredible statement about God: Job 13:15 "Even though He slay me, yet will I hope in Him."

God is not your spiritual genie in the bottle, rub Him with prayer and get three wishes.  
God is certainly ABLE to answer your prayers, but the reality is, sometimes He says "no."  
That's a reality of faith, that's a reality of life.

Uncompromising faith doesn't deny the realities of life.  
We need to have the same attitude as Jesus:  
Luke 22:42 "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

Uncompromising faith means that we don't deny the realities of life's trials and tribulations.  
In the midst of those, we seek God's will, no matter what they may be.

3. No hedging of your convictions.

No rationalizing. No compromising. No yielding.  
You stand firm. No matter what. Even to the point of death!

Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego wouldn't compromise. They wouldn't rationalize. They wouldn't yield. Look at their response to the threat of life:

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."

They said, "Even if God does not save us from this furnace, even if we burn to death, we will not betray God by worshiping false gods or images made of gold."

No hedging. Even to the point of death.  
Some of you right now are thinking, “Seriously? Are we REALLY expected to be willing to die for our faith?”

Absolutely. If need be. Look at what Jesus said,

Revelation 2:10 “Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

Others of you are thinking, “Yes, but, does anyone really do that?”

Absolutely. Thousands and thousands and thousands of Christians throughout history have refused to compromise, have refused to hedge, have refused to deny their faith and were subsequently killed for their stance. Others have given their lives in the act of serving the Lord.

Let me give you just one example:

In 1956, in Ecuador, South America, a group of five missionaries including Jim Elliott and Nate Saint were killed by a tribe of natives who they had been trying to share Christ with.

But here’s the interesting thing about their massacre. The five men were armed with guns when they were attacked, but refused to defend themselves against this group of natives who were only armed with spears and hatchets.

Why would they allow themselves to be killed? What good would that serve?

In an article about these five brave men, Christianity Today stated, “The missionaries had vowed to one another before God that they would not defend themselves against human attack, even in the face of death.”

But why? Why would they not defend themselves?!

In another article written by Mildred A. Martin, we find the reason:

“The five missionaries had guns with them in their camp, but they did not use them to fight the Indians. When the Auca men came toward them with their spears, they did not shoot back with their guns. They knew that if they would shoot the Indians, they could probably save their own lives. But then they would never be able to teach the Aucas about Jesus! So they chose to let themselves be killed, and let the Aucas have another chance to become Christians.

The Aucas always remembered those five strange white men who had been so kind to them and had not tried to kill them. And so a year later when more missionaries tried again to speak to the Aucas about Jesus, they were ready to listen. Several of the men who had helped to kill Jim and his friends with their spears now became Christians.”

They gave their lives so that others could come to the saving knowledge of Jesus. They gave their lives, because they believed in obeying the command of Jesus Christ, no matter what the cost may be:

Matthew 28:19-20

19 (Jesus said) Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

These five men of uncompromising faith, were committed to obeying Jesus. Even if it cost them their lives.

Years earlier Jim Elliott (one of those five missionaries) wrote, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."

You may never have to give your life because of your faith.

But, what does it take just to keep you quiet about Jesus?

Will you be a man or woman of uncompromising faith?

Can you do more than you're doing?

It all begins by receiving Jesus as LORD and Savior.