

FAITH FACTOR
#4 – EXTREME FAITH FOR THE FIRES OF LIFE
DANIEL 1 AND 3

Intro: Most of us have enough faith for the everyday challenges of life, but what about the occasional ultimate challenges – fire-trials? Will you have the faith to survive and thrive spiritually – extreme faith? Here’s how.

Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility – young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king’s palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king’s table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king’s service. Daniel 1:3-5

Step 1: Know the World is Hostile

- Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah found themselves in a world _____ to their beliefs in God – Babylon. They even had their names changed to encourage them to accept and conform to their new culture and its values; to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.
- Today, much of our world is a Babylon, hostile to God’s priorities, values and ways. The world doesn’t want to _____ to His ways.
- Committed Christians who live their faith will experience hostility. The “world” wants you to _____ to it, thus causing you the ultimate challenge of **fire-trials**.

Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, “Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see.” So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days. Daniel 1:11-14

Step 2: Develop Your Faith Over Time

- Extreme faith doesn’t suddenly appear. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah began building their faith as young men when first captives. This was done through living by God’s _____ rather than by the world’s values.
- Today, our faith will become extreme faith and decision making spiritually wise for the “**fire-trials**,” only if we develop our Christian values and _____ over time through smaller tests, trials, and temptations. Right values help build an extreme faith.

(The astrologers said) “You have issued a decree, O king, that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music must fall down and worship the image of gold, and that whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into a blazing furnace. But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon – Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego – who pay no attention to you, O king. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up.” Daniel 3:10-12

Step 3: Stand Together to Stand Stronger

- God never intended for us to stand _____. Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah had each other for strength and support. They were a team, thus stronger. (Eccl. 4:12; Gal. 6:2)
- Today, we need deep Christian _____ for the same reason, but few of us have this support. When we stand alone in **fire-trials**, our faith often fails.

Step 4: Boldly Refuse to Compromise

- Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah could have compromised by _____, “We can fake the worship. Our people can’t be helped if we’re dead.” It’s common sense.

But faith is seldom common sense, and common sense is seldom faith.

- Today, we compromise by going along with the crowd, or not _____ out, thus avoiding some **fire-trials**. We are neutralized as God's voice. Do you think He will bless that?

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 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."
Daniel 3:16-17

Step 5: Believe in God's Ability to Deliver

- Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah boldly spoke that their God could deliver. Why? They remembered God's scriptural promises, _____, and past personal events when God had done so.
- Today, we can be confident for the same reasons. God is _____ and consistent, and can deliver you from every **fire-trial**.

"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."
Daniel 3:17

Step 6: Accept and Submit to God's Will, No Matter What

- Knowing that God **can** deliver does not mean God **will** deliver. The three Hebrews knew God could have other _____ for the benefit of His kingdom. It is ultimately not about only us. (Hebrews 11:39-40)
- Today, God may deliver us from adversity, trials, and temptations, or _____ them. If we refuse to accept His will, we have a self-centered faith. Trust His judgment.

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 and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace... 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." 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." 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.
Daniel 3:19-20, 24-26

The Result: We Are Honored and God Glorified

- After being thrown into the furnace, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah found that they were not _____. God was with them, and they were protected. They also were honored. God used this occasion to display His power and glory to a great pagan nation – Babylon.
- Today, He always has a _____ and purpose in our "**fire-trials**," even when we can't see it. He will always be with us through them. (Heb. 13:5-6)

Is your faith extreme enough for your fire-trials?

Answers: Step 1: Hostile; submit; conform. Step 2: Values; faith. Step 3: Alone; friendships. Step 4: Rationalizing; speaking. Step 5: Past history; faithful. Step 6: Plans; through. Result: Alone; plan.