

BEING FAITHFUL IN THE FURNACE

November 27th 2011 PM

Revelation 2:8-11 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

There is no question regarding whether or not we, as Christians, as the Church, will face tribulations, trials and troubles. It's been said over and over again that as long as you are making an effort to serve the Lord, we will be attacked by the Devil, and if you're not being attacked, you probably aren't doing anything. The inference being that as long as we stay off the battlefield, that somehow Satan will leave us alone. I don't find this in my King James Bible. In fact, just the opposite. In 1 Peter 5:8 God writes that Satan walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. If you know anything about the hunting habits of a lion, you will know they don't go after the strong, but the weak. I'm not saying they're cowards, just lazy. Satan is the same. The key to surviving Satan's attacks is to be strong, stick with the herd, and heed the advice of the leader. Resist the devil and he will FLEE from you (James 4:7)

But there is no question regarding whether or not we will face tribulations. **Acts 14:22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.** The question is, will we be faithful in the heat of tribulation. I want to look at a most familiar, famous example on how to handle these times in our lives. Our three heroes, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah aka, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in Daniel 3.

We know the story well, but I find three important aspects of how they handled this challenge.

1. **They responded with clarity their decision to not compromise their faith: Daniel 3:16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.**
 - a. There was no discussion regarding compromise. Compromise will always bring you down.
 - b. They did not have to "pray about it"
 - c. There was complete clarity. No doubt. No room for misinterpretation. Their answer came from their faith in God; **Matthew 10:19 But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.** Just as Jesus told his Disciples they would be brought up before governors and kings for His sake, he also told them that he would give them that same hour the words to say.
 - d. The answer to facing tribulations is never to compromise with the world. It will only make matters worse.

2. **They affirmed their faith was placed in the only One who could save them.** Daniel 3:17-18 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.
 - a. They did not try and “handle things” themselves but placed their complete faith and trust in God. They did not “negotiate” their way out... “Well, how about if we only bow to the idol on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays? They did not “rationalize” their situation. “Well, we’ll bow but we won’t mean it in our heart!” When we rationalize sin, not only do we lose, and God loses, but those we are trying to be a witness to lose.
 - b. Whatever the outcome, they would heed to the will of God
 - c. They did not panic when it was clear they would be tossed into the furnace. They had complete peace about it. John 14:27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

3. **Because of their faithfulness, Christ was glorified and “seen” in their midst.** Daniel 3:25 He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.
 - a. When we glorify God in how we handle our tribulations, trials, tests and temptations, our testimony will be so clear that Christ will be revealed in our lives, and will impact the lives of those around us. When we try to witness to them, they will see the power of Christ in our lives.
 - b. Those that are witness to how we handled these trials will often come to realize the power and presence of God. Daniel 3:29 Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort. Daniel 4:1-3 Nebuchadnezzar the king, unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. I thought it good to shew the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me. How great are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders! his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation.

BONUS: When we handle our tribulations according to God’s will, we will be blessed: Daniel 3:30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon.

There is no question as to whether or not we will go through the furnace of refinement. 1 Peter 1:6-7 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

The question is, will we be found faithful in the furnace? Will our faith be found when Christ returns, or when we see Him in Glory? Luke 18:6-8 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?