

Th122 Foundation Doctrines

Lesson Th122 - 7 Faith: Believing God

In our previous 5 lessons we have learned aspects of repentance which include: godly sorrow, a change of mind and direction, confession, and restitution. Today we will begin to learn about the second foundational doctrine, "Faith."

What is faith? "To believe" is the simple answer. Each night when we close our eyes to go to sleep, we fully believe and expect to awake the next morning. This confidence in what we believe is "faith." The New Testament writer of the Book of Hebrews wrote a much deeper definition of faith. He wrote that "faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see" (Heb 11:1).

There were three young Jewish men that illustrate this definition of faith. They had a belief in God that would allow them to face certain death. By faith Moses led the Jewish people out of Egypt and into the land of Canaan. For 400 years the people would be led by various judges. Eventually the people demanded a king to rule over them, so God gave them kings. Some of the kings were godly men. Others led the people into idolatry. Israel reached its greatest power and wealth during the time of King David's son, Solomon. But Solomon's son was not a wise king like his father. During his reign the kingdom was split into two. The tribes of Benjamin and Judah formed the southern kingdom of Judah, and the ten northern tribes became Israel.

Now many of the kings of Judah were godly men, but most of the kings of Israel were not. When the people turned their hearts away from God, he allowed the nations around them to attack them. Finally, around 750 years before Jesus was born, the Assyrians conquered Israel. They carried the ten northern tribes into captivity. The Assyrians conquered much of modern Syria and Iraq, plus parts of southern Turkey too. God spared the people of Judah from Assyria. But 200 years later, the next major empire of the Middle East, the Babylonians, invaded Judah and conquered the land. Many conquerors during ancient times would kill all of the leaders of their conquered enemies. But the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, was different. He made his kingdom great by absorbing the best and brightest men of the lands he conquered into his own government. When Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah he took back to his capital city many of the most educated young men in Israel. Among them were three young men whom he called Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They would continue their education with the elite of Babylon.

King Nebuchadnezzar made an idol of gold that was 28 meters high and nearly three meters wide. He set the golden idol on the broad plain near his capital city of Babylon. He then invited all of his government leaders to its dedication. A great number of people gathered, including Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

The herald loudly proclaimed to everyone present, "Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do: As soon as you hear the music sound, you

must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Whoever does not fall down and worship, will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace!"

Now Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego looked at each other in shock and fear. They were righteous Jewish men and knew that the Ten Commandments forbade worshipping any idol or foreign god. Each of them wrestled in their hearts about what they would do when the music sounded. Suddenly the music began. Across the plain the leaders of Babylon began to kneel and bow before the king's idol. Finally, everyone lay prostrate before the idol except for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Word of this was brought to King Nebuchadnezzar and the three Jewish lads were dragged into his presence. "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up?" the king yelled, furious with anger. "If you are willing to fall down and worship my idol when the music sounds, then I will spare your lives. But, if you continue to refuse to obey my command and worship my gods, then you will be thrown alive into the furnace of fire!"

Nervously the boys stood before the enraged king. Their hearts were filled with fear and dread. But they believed in their God. They believed that the God of the Israelites was the only true God.

"Well?" the king demanded. "What do you say?"

"King 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 deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the idol of gold you have set up" (Dan 3:1-18).

Can you imagine how furious this answer must have made the king? He became so angry that he ordered the furnace to be heated to seven times its normal heat. All of the government officials gathered to watch the spectacle of the three boys being burned alive. The king's strongest soldiers bound Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego with ropes and threw them into the blazing fire. The fire's heat was so intense that the flames lashed out of the fire and killed the soldiers that threw the boys into the fire.

The king looked around at all of his government officials. They would now all understand and believe that they had to obey him or they too would be dealt with harshly. Suddenly there was a gasp from the crowd and people began to point towards the fire. King Nebuchadnezzar spun around to see what they were staring at. The king squinted his eyes at the brilliance of the flames. Suddenly, there in the midst of the fire he saw movement. It looked like there were people walking about in the fire. "Were there not only three men that were tied up and thrown into the fire?" the king asked.

"Certainly, Your Majesty." they replied in fear and amazement.

"Look, I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods!" The king spoke in awe. Then raising his voice, he called into the fire, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here to me!"

So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, and all of the government officials crowded around them in amazement. They reached out and touched their clothing and leaned close to them to detect any odor of smoke. But the three Jewish boys were not harmed in any way. Not a single hair of their heads was singed. Nor were their garments scorched by the flames. Only the ropes that had bound them were burned and gone.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar raised his voice and 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 my command. They were willing to give up their lives, rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. Therefore, I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way!" (Dan 3:19-29).

In this story we have a powerful example of faith towards God. The three boys believed that God could and would save them. Their faith or belief was so complete, that even if God did not deliver them, they would still trust in him.

This story is **important** because it teaches us that our faith is in God and his will, whether or not he rescues us from our circumstances.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that faith means believing God, even when we cannot see the outcome.

Let's **review** this lesson:

1. What is a simple definition for faith? [Pause]
A. If you said that to have faith is "to believe," you are right.
2. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to do what? [Pause]
A. If you said that they refused to bow and worship the king's idol, then you are correct.
3. What happened when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were thrown into the king's furnace of fire? [Pause]
A. If you said, "God honored their faith and delivered them alive," then you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to watch this lesson at least three times. Then find someone and tell them the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Explain to them what it means to have faith.