

## Faith And Friends

In Daniel 3, Nebuchadnezzar set up an image and commanded the people to worship it. This included three Hebrew worthies: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The three men refused to worship the image, even after being threatened by being thrown into a fiery furnace. They knew he would make good on his promise (Jeremiah 29:22), but they were confident God would deliver them (v. 17). Enraged, Nebuchadnezzar did indeed throw them into the furnace. Interestingly, they had no logical reason to believe that God would deliver them from the fiery furnace; they had no “precedent” to fall back on, and that is true faith (Hebrews 11:1, 34). Acting on one’s faith separates true faith from superficial profession. The young men made no excuses when it came to bowing down before the image. Faith can only improve when it is used (1 Peter 1:6-7; Job 27:1-6; 42:1-6). The passage from Peter is especially pertinent considering how far the apostle had come since the days of Jesus (cp. Matthew 8:26; 14:27, 50-52; Luke 22:54-62).

God allowed those men to suffer by being thrown into the fiery furnace, but He did not allow them to go through it alone. If bad friends can hurt (1 Corinthians 15:33), imagine what good friends can do! Good friends are invaluable (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Proverbs 17:17; 27:6, 9-10, 17). Under the Old Law, if a friend enticed someone to leave God and serve idols, they were to be put to death (Deuteronomy 13:6-11). God knew the potential of bad influences! The friends we chose, even when we are older, make a huge difference as to whether we will be faithful or unfaithful. Delilah was a terrible influence on Samson (Judges 16:4-21), but Aquila and Priscilla built one another up (Acts 18:26; Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19). Make sure you choose wisely!

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