



STRONGER STRONGER LIFE STRATEGY - STRATEGIC DISAPPOINTING

**DECIDE IN ADVANCE WHO YOU ARE GOING TO OFFEND – CULTURE
(PEOPLE) OR GOD.**

“But Daniel had determined in his heart, that he would not defile himself...”
DANIEL 1:8

IF YOU OFFEND CULTURE, FIERY TRIALS WILL COME.

“King Nebuchadnezzar made a gold statue ninety feet tall and nine feet wide[a] and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. Then he sent messages to the high officers, officials, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the provincial officials to come to the dedication of the statue he had set up. So all these officials came and stood before the statue King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Then a herald shouted out, “People of all races and nations and languages, listen to the king’s command! When you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and other musical instruments, bow to the ground to worship King Nebuchadnezzar’s gold statue. Anyone who refuses to obey will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.” So at the sound of the musical instruments, all the people, whatever their race or nation or language, bowed to the ground and worshiped the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. But some of the astrologers went to the king and informed on the Jews. They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “Long live the king! You issued a decree requiring all the people to bow down and worship the gold statue when they hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and other musical instruments. That decree also states that those who refuse to obey must be thrown into a blazing furnace. But there are some Jews—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—whom you have put in charge of the province of Babylon. They pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They refuse to serve your gods and do not worship the gold statue you have set up.” Then Nebuchadnezzar flew into a rage and ordered that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought before him. When they were brought in, Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you refuse to serve my gods or to worship the gold statue I have set up? I will give you one more chance to bow down and worship the statue I have made when you hear the sound of the musical instruments. But if you refuse, you will be thrown immediately into the blazing furnace. And then what god will be able to rescue you from my power?” Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. But even

if he doesn't, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up." Nebuchadnezzar was so furious with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that his face became distorted with rage. He commanded that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual. Then he ordered some of the strongest men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. So they tied them up and threw them into the furnace, fully dressed in their pants, turbans, robes, and other garments. And because the king, in his anger, had demanded such a hot fire in the furnace, the flames killed the soldiers as they threw the three men in. So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, securely tied, fell into the roaring flames.

Daniel 3:1-23

"Dear friends, don't be surprised or shocked that you are going through testing that is like walking through fire." 1 Peter 4:12

WE PRAY TO BE DELIVERED FROM THE FIRE, BUT GOD PROMISES THAT THE GREATEST MIRACLES ARE FOUND IN THE FIRE.

24 But suddenly, Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in amazement and exclaimed to his advisers, "Didn't we tie up three men and throw them into the furnace?"

"Yes, Your Majesty, we certainly did," they replied.

25 "Look!" Nebuchadnezzar shouted. "I see four men, unbound, walking around in the fire unharmed! And the fourth looks like a son of the gods!"

26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came as close as he could to the door of the flaming furnace and shouted: "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!"

So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stepped out of the fire. **27** Then the high officers, officials, governors, and advisers crowded around them and saw that the fire had not touched them. Not a hair on their heads was singed, and their clothing was not scorched. They didn't even smell of smoke!

28 Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent his angel to rescue his servants who trusted in him. They defied the king's command and were willing to die rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. **29** Therefore, I make this decree: If any people, whatever their race or nation or language, speak a word against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they will be torn limb from limb, and their houses will be turned into heaps of rubble. There is no other god who can rescue like this!"

30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to even higher positions in the province of Babylon. Daniel 3:24-30

THE MIRACLE OF GOD'S PRESENCE

"Didn't we tie up three men and throw them into the furnace?"

I see four men, unbound, walking around in the fire unharmed! And the fourth looks like a son of the gods!"

THE MIRACLE OF GOD'S FREEDOM

"I see four men, unbound..."

WHATEVER THE OUTCOME IN THE WORLD'S EYES, GOD REWARDS THE MOTIVE.

32 And what more could I say to convince you? For there is not enough time to tell you of the faith of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets.

33 Through faith's power they conquered kingdoms and established true justice. Their faith fastened onto their promises and pulled them into reality! It was faith that shut the mouth of lions, **34** put out the power of raging fire, and caused many to escape certain death by the sword. Although weak, their faith imparted power to make them strong! Faith sparked courage within them and they became mighty warriors in battle, pulling armies from another realm into battle array. **35** Faith-filled women saw their dead children raised in resurrection power.

Yet it was faith that enabled others to endure great atrocities. They were stretched out on the wheel and tortured, and didn't deny their faith in order to be freed, because they longed for a more honorable and glorious resurrection!

36 Others were mocked and experienced the most severe beating with whips; they were in chains and imprisoned. **37** Some of these faith champions were brutally killed by stoning, being sawn in two or slaughtered by the sword. These lived in faith as they went about wearing goatskins and sheepskins for clothing. They lost everything they possessed, they endured great afflictions, and they were cruelly mistreated. **38** They wandered the earth living in the desert wilderness, in caves, on barren mountains and in holes in the earth. Truly, the world was not even worthy of them, not realizing who they were.

Hebrews 11:32-38

"IT WAS GOOD THAT IT WAS IN YOUR HEART"

"So even if you should suffer now for doing God's will, continue doing good and trust your futures to the judgment and mercy of a faithful Creator." 1 Peter 4:19

Application:

WE MUST DECIDE IN ADVANCE WHO WE ARE GOING TO OFFEND.

IF WE OFFEND CULTURE, GOD PROMISES FIERY TRIALS WILL COME.

WE WILL NOT SUFFER THE FIERY TRIAL ALONE. EMMANUEL – GOD WITH US.