

Fiery Furnace Faith

By Shawn Parker

Executive Director-Treasurer, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board



Parker

Well, it's summertime in Mississippi and that means heat and humidity that can be almost unbearable. Though we've been blessed with rather seasonable weather so far this year, the last week has been a good reminder that this is still the deep south. This time of the year makes me especially thankful for air conditioning, watermelons, and ice cream of all sorts.

Every year as the weather heats up I think about those three young Israelites who were living in Babylon as prisoners during the 6th century BC. Of course I'm talking about Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. You're probably more familiar with them by their Babylonian names of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Their story is one of the most familiar in the Scripture, and is a mainstay for children's Sunday school teachers the world over.

As their story goes, they refused to bow down and worship the golden image Nebuchadnezzar erected. As a result, they were sentenced to be thrown into the fiery furnace that had been heated seven times its normal temperature. They were given one last chance to worship the golden idol before the old heave-ho, and in that moment they made one of the greatest statements of faith found in history. They said, "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up" (Dan. 3.17-18).

Truth be told, there are several degrees of faith demonstrated by disciples. Some have a feel-good faith that says I'll serve God as long as everything is going well. Others have an emergency faith that says I'll look to the Lord when I need help but not otherwise. Then, there's the fiery furnace faith that says I believe God can, but if He doesn't I'm still submitted. Now that's the kind of faith we all should strive to reflect.

The heat around us these days goes far beyond the physical temperature. We're also dealing with the emotional and spiritual heat being generated by the fiery trials of COVID-19, social unrest, and economic uncertainty. If you're anything like me (God bless you if you are), you're probably growing weary with the strange year this has been. However, let me remind you that God is in absolute control of all circumstances and can be trusted no matter how discouraging the landscape may appear.

So, let's keep our eyes on Him, our minds in His Word, and our hearts under His Spirit. If we do, we'll discover that He never leaves us alone. Just like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, we'll discover that He doesn't always keep us out of trouble but He does promise to be in the trouble with us. Keep up the good work and know that He is the light at the end of the tunnel and the hand you can grab in the middle of the darkness.

Parker may be contacted at simpletruth@mbcb.org.