

The Nature of Faith

(Daniel 3:14) "Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, "Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up?"

(Daniel 3:15) "And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?"

(Daniel 3:16-17) "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17 If this be so, 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."

This isn't so much about defiance in the face of a dictator, but commitment to a loving Lord.

(Daniel 3:18) "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."

"But if not". Three small words, but the impact is immeasurable.

(Mark 14:32-34) "And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." 33 And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. 34 And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch."

(Mark 14:35-36) "And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. 36 And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

"Not my will, but yours" is another way to say "but if not".

In the first scenario, the life of one man is saved through seeing these men rescued from this trial. But in the second, the lives of all mankind are saved through enduring the trial.

Where does this kind of faith come from?

When we are lacking faith, I don't believe it is solely a trust issue. It's a heart issue, a love issue.

(James 1:3) "for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness."

(James 1:12) "Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love Him."

Our love for God is essential to our steadfast faith.

Trust is a byproduct of faith, not the means to it.

(1 John 4:19) "We love because he first loved us."

(Ephesians 3:17-19) "so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Life Application:

- We are to pray for the things we need/want, but how can we release the outcome to the Lord?
- How can we let love be the motivation for our obedience?
- Where in your life is God calling you to say "But if not"?