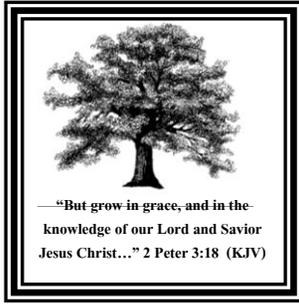


## SPIRITUAL MATURITY SERIES

### “Faith In The Fire”

**Key Verses:** Daniel 3: 1 - 30



Few bible stories are as well known as the story of the “Three Hebrew Boys” – Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Their story is one of immense faith and brotherly love. Determined not to worship the idol god of the king, they stood facing the perils of a fiery furnace, fully confident in their God’s ability to deliver them. In this lesson we will look into the rationale of this confidence in God and the courage that such confidence can produce.

### Do You Want God To Be Fair AND Just With You?

Is our God a “fair” God or a “just” God? Does God really treat everyone equally? Have you ever felt as though God has not been fair to you? Webster defines the word “fair” as - marked by impartiality and honesty; free from **self-interests**, prejudice or favoritism. **QUESTION:** Is God every truly free from imposing his “self-interests?” Now what about the question about God being “just?” Again, Webster defines “just” as: having a basis in or conforming to fact or reason, being reasonable in judgement; acting or being in conformity with what is morally upright, good or **righteous**. **QUESTION:** When reviewing these two definitions, is it possible for God to be just but not be fair? The apparent answer here is “yes!” – because to be just requires one to be morally righteous in their actions; while to be fair requires the absence of self-interests and impartiality. There are several examples of these attributes of God in scripture: **READ: Acts 2: 38 – 41 and Acts 7:54 – 60** **QUESTIONS:** Now, was it “fair” that God would afford the Apostle Peter the privilege of preaching the gospel resulting in 3000 souls being added to the church, while Deacon Stephen preaching that same gospel message resulted in him being assassinated? **READ: Acts 12: 1 – 10;** Does it seem “fair” to you that the Apostle James was arrested for his affiliation with the church of Jesus Christ and executed in prison, while the Apostle Peter was arrested on those same charges, and marked for execution too, but was later rescued and released from prison by an angel?

**QUESTION:** We have heard the old saying that goes something like this: “God is not a respecter of persons, what God has done for others, he’ll do the same thing for you.” – Is this really true? This concept is mentioned by the Apostle Peter in **Acts 10:34 – 35** What exactly do you believe the Apostle was referring to in this statement?

In addition, Since we are unaware and unsure of people’s true motives and even the future effects of our own actions, can you and I really ever know what is “just?” Can you and I truly render morally righteous and upright judgement based on our complete knowledge of past, present and future events and matters? **QUESTIONS:** We call the legal institution in this country our “justice system” – but is this an accurate term for describing the legal institution in this country? Can men really meet this criterion for “just-ness?” If not, can the justice system in our country be able to consistently make “just” decisions?

### The Resources of Our Faith

**Read:** Dan 3: 16 – 18

In reviewing this scripture several assertions of the attributes of God are put forth by these three Hebrew youngsters. Let’s take a moment to examine just a few:

**GOD IS ABLE:** This is faith in the power or ability of God to accomplish his will. **READ: Jude 1:24;**  
**QUESTIONS:** Would you agree that it is one thing to make a blanket statement that “God can do anything” as opposed to trusting that God will be able to do that one particular “thing” in your life?  
**READ: Mark 9: 23 – 25;** How could this man believe in God’ ability to heal his son and at the same time harbor unbelief?

**GOD IS WILLING:** It may indeed be one thing to believe that God is “able” but at the same time have doubt that God is in fact “willing” to intervene on our behalf. **READ 1 John 5:14 – 15 and Matt 8:2.** How might we be able to better determine the will of God?

**GOD IS SOVEREIGN:** When we read this passage in Daniel, we come to understand that was mature kind of faith bound up in the one statement “but if not” – that truly made these young boys “fire-proof!”  
**QUESTION:** Why was this such a profound statement for these young men to make? In this way these boys acknowledge that God exercising his power and saving them from the king’s fiery furnace may NOT be within God’s purpose for their lives; in this mindset these boys were acknowledging God’s sovereign right to rule and govern their lives.

### **OBSTACLES OF FAITH**

**DOUBT:** Doubt is unlike unbelief. Unbelief says “I looked into the matter and I don’t accept such a claim and walks away. Doubt on the other hand, looks at the matter and simply says “I don’t know if I can trust it” and leaves a person in a holding pattern of uncertainty. In other words unbelief dismisses the claim entirely while doubt leaves a void of uncertainty. Satan is a grand master at creating doubt: **READ: Genesis 3:1 – QUESTION:** What was Satan trying to accomplish in the mind of Eve concerning what God has spoken to her regarding the trees of the garden?

**COMPROMISE:** Notice that King Nebuchhadnezzar did not demand that these Hebrew boys would deny their faith in God, but simply bow to the idol god like everyone else. Satan was merely asking these Hebrew boys to share a little spot of their worship with this idol god and their God could have the larger portion of their devotion. **READ Acts 5: 1 – 2 QUESTION:** Does the scripture tell us that this couple held back the bigger part of the sale from God? Satan doesn’t require that we give him the larger percentage of anything we have – he is comfortable maximizing our minimal sin investment! On the other hand, God requires our all!

**FAITH:** Faith always involves risks. If there are no risks then there is really no need for faith. Likewise, where there is no fear, there is no real need for God to provide us with courage. If we can clearly see the path of life ahead then we are most likely walking by sight and not by faith. **QUESTION:** How can you tell if you have faith in God, or faith in your God-given abilities?

### **Will God Deliver Us?**

**QUESTION:** Is God delivering us from every trial or problem necessarily in our best interests? Why or why not? We must note that the Hebrew boys were not delivered from the fiery furnace they were delivered though it! Is it possible for us to learn more about ourselves and about God while in the furnace than we could have ever learned outside of it? I have personally come to believe that only a few of us are delivered from the furnace of trials, but most of us are delivered while in it! Remember, when the doors of the furnace was opened the king saw four men inside! But only three came out... the one man stayed in the furnace – perhaps waiting on our arrival.

