

## A TOUGH CHOICE

Living in a society that is hostile to one's innermost convictions is tough. Picture in your mind three young men who have been brought up obviously in a godly home, but with the fall of their nation, find themselves in a foreign culture that has no respect for their God. At first, their godly demeanor wins the favor of their captors—but not for long. Eventually their religion gets them in trouble with the king. You may read the account in the eighth chapter of the Old Testament-book of Daniel. The 3 young men were Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, Jewish captives in idolatrous Babylon, ruled by King Nebuchadnezzar. They fared well until the king decreed that all must bow before the idolatrous image he had erected. . They were compelled to make a tough choice: either bow before the king's image, or be cast into a burning, fiery furnace. I would suggest that we can draw from this event three important facts.

**First, the world expects conformity to its standards.** Godly standards are seldom long respected. Even in a "Christian nation," there exist forces that are hostile to Biblical values. After all, "the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one" (1 John 5:19, NKJV). These three Jews would continue to prosper in the favor of the king if they would only compromise their conviction that there was only one God, but to now bow before his image would appear disastrous. Would they "bite the hand that feeds them," or be true to God. Even with our nation's history of freedom, the pull of political correctness soon wins out. Society may, for a time, tolerate differences, but will eventually turn up the heat on those who would differ. When it does, Christians must be ready, as these three young men, to stand firm. Two of today's idols that we are expected to bow before are abortion and same-sex "marriage," which remind us of the ancient gods, Moloch and Eros. We can be accepted if we keep our opinions to ourselves and be willing to compromise our convictions.

**Second, we are given a choice of gods.** The tough choice these three made was to continue to serve God, and bow before none other—not even the king's. Many serve God only as long as they get what they want. These three knew God could save them from the furnace, but would He? Let's remember, God is still God—even when we're in a "fiery furnace" . God is not a god who must fit my criteria.

**Third, Faith wins out.** The furnace was stoked seven times its normal heat. The men who threw them in were, themselves, destroyed by the heat, while the three servants of God were spared. Their faith won out! Today, we live in the aftermath of the "sexual revolution" of the '60s. Many thought we were liberated from Biblical standards, but in the process our nation is "burned" with the fires started by a permissive society. The price of this so-called sexual freedom is broken homes, an increase in sexually-transmitted diseases drug abuse, sexual violence, single parenting, mounting economic problems, etc. While the three young Jews in Daniel stood up for what's right, God stood up for them. Four, not three, were seen in the furnace—one "like the Son of God" (v. 25). The young men walked out without so much as their hair singed or the smell of smoke. God does not always

choose to deliver His people from the “furnaces” of trial, but, if faithful, we will ultimately be delivered. In the context of Paul speaking of our resurrection, he says, “But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:57). Sometimes it seems Satan is in command, “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Rom. 8:37)

--Ron