



WHILE WE WAIT

Faithful Living in Uncertain Times

A FOCUS-Kenya Special Edition Bible Study Series—Volume II

Introduction

Study three addressed, ‘*Manifesting Our Identity*’ as God’s chosen people. This study, ‘*Overcoming the Challenge of Compromise*’ will focus on the need to overcome the challenge of compromise as God’s people in a world that is estranged from God.

STUDY 4: Overcoming the Challenge of Compromise

Learning from Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego

A. Perspective Article

The French Foreign Legion is said to have a motto that reads, “If I falter, push me on. If I stumble, pick me up. If I retreat, shoot me.”¹ This is a statement of commitment that befits all soldiers in the army of the Lord. Its implication is clear: turning back is not an option! We might as well say that this is why, in the Christian armour, there is no provision for the back!

The Scriptures reveal the reality of retreat in battle. For example, the psalmist records in Psalm 78:9 that the children of Ephraim, though armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle. Clearly, they acted in fear and unbelief, the very opposite of what it means to be committed and courageous. Many Bible scholars have attempted to pin down the particular historic incident in the annals of the Jews that Psalm 78:9 refers to. Nevertheless, such details are not as important as the lessons that we can glean from the verse.

The experience of the Ephraimites is not far from the real-life experience of many professing believers today. They are gifted with spiritual resources necessary for an overcoming life. But in “the day of battle” when it matters most, instead of gallantly standing up for Jesus, they yield or turn back.² As a picture of the entire Old Testament people of God, their life had become characterized by unfaithfulness and ingratitude to God who had done so much for them.

¹ Sermon | PastorLife [WWW Document], n.d. URL http://www.pastorlife.com/members/sermon.asp?sermon_id=3836 (accessed 7.29.20).

² Psalm 78:9 Commentary - The Treasury of David [WWW Document], n.d. . Bible Study Tools. URL <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/treasury-of-david/psalms-78-9.html> (accessed 7.29.20).

When we think about the challenge of compromise at individual level, the story of Daniel and his friends in exile provide great lessons for Christians exiled in a post-Christian contemporary culture. In 605-562 BC, Jerusalem fell under Nebuchadnezzar. Judah was decisively conquered and exiled to Babylon. Among the exiles were three young men of royal pedigree; Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Along with Daniel, the three entered the king's service after being trained for 3 years (see Daniel. 1).³ Their service to the king inevitably made them conspicuous. Thus, their defiance to the order to worship the golden image set up by king Nebuchadnezzar was easily detectable. The command to worship the golden image was an invitation to disobey the first commandment (*cf.* Ex. 20:2-5a). However, in obedience to God's command, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego defied the king's order and refused to bow before the image.

This account brings to sharp focus the Christian call to radical commitment to God. It is a commitment that goes all the way, whether or not God comes to change our situation. When push comes to shove, will our anchor hold or will we falter and fail because of a fledgling commitment in our faith? Will we compromise or radically say 'no' to *"ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age"* (Titus 2:12)? No doubt, we need a degree of commitment even greater than what inspired the French Legionnaires: "If I falter, push me on. If I stumble, pick me up. If I retreat, shoot me!"⁴

B. Study Questions: Read Daniel 3:1-30

1. What insights do you draw from reading the devotional article?
2. Describe the events in this passage, and highlight the crisis that that Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego found themselves in?
3. What does the response by the young men in vv. 16-18 reveal about their faith and level of commitment to the worship of God?

³ Introduction: In Exile at Babylon U. (Daniel 1) | Bible Commentary | Theology of Work [WWW Document], n.d. URL <https://www.theologyofwork.org/old-testament/daniel/introduction-in-exile-at-babylon-u.-daniel-1> (accessed 7.29.20).

⁴ Ibid.

4. In what areas have you been tempted to compromise your commitment to God during this COVID-19 times? In what way(s) does this study provide help on how to overcome the challenge of compromise?

C. Take Home

Observe the impact of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego's commitment (vv. 28-31) and indicate how it inspires you to be radical in your commitment to God? What specific action(s) do you intend to take in order to live true to your observations in the challenging circumstances of life in which we find ourselves in today as Christians?