

# The Proper Faith Response

When it comes to living the life of a believer, the subject of faith always seems to be a struggle. What is faith and how do I get it to work for me? I believe the problem is focusing on faith and not the subject of your faith. Faith itself is defined by the book of Hebrews' author as "the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen." (Heb. 11:1) As we have long studied, another definition that is used is "insight from God, agreement with God, and obedience to God."

The best definition of faith in the O.T. and the N.T., practically speaking, is defined as receiving a clear word from God, then obeying that word, and persevering despite the conflict that comes because of your obedience. However, the main thing is learning whether or not we can trust the one in whom we put our faith. Can we really trust Him and will He keep His word to us?

I would like to talk about two instances, one in the O.T. and one in the N.T., that have caused challenges in perceiving God as trustworthy. Let me first state that we have an enemy that masquerades invisibly sowing seeds of doubt in the minds of men to get them to believe God will not keep His word. Many use the word "sovereign" when God which is interpreted by most as doing what He wants to whomever He wants even to the point of breaking His word.

If sovereignty is defined as supreme power and authority, we can conclude that it is a good definition. But, God in His sovereignty has, by covenant, included us in His decision making. Amos 3:7 states, "Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets."

Before God set out to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, God He said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?" (Gen. 18:17)

When many say God is "Sovereign" what they mean is that they think He is capricious, which is defined as "given to sudden and unaccountable changes of mood or behavior; subject to, led by or indicative of a sudden, odd notion or unpredictable change, erratic.

One thing about God that we must come to grips with is when it comes to His word, He does not change! The Shema states:

"Hear O Israel! The Lord our God; the Lord our God is one!" (Deut. 6:4)

In another place it says:

"I am the Lord, I change not! Therefore you sons of Israel are not consumed." (Mal. 3:6)

"My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing (Debar) that has gone out of my lips." (Psalms 89:34)

"So shall my word be that goeth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void (empty), but it shall accomplish that which I please and shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it." (Isa. 55:11)

# The Proper Faith Response

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forevermore.” (Heb. 13:8)

“For truly I say unto you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke (jot or tittle) shall pass from the Law (My Word) until all is accomplished.” (Matt. 5:18)

God always has and always will keep His word! The Bible says, He has exalted His word above His name. (Psalm 138:2) His name does not make His word good, His Word makes His name good!

As we said before, there are two places in Scripture that seem to cause trouble when it comes to God always keeping His word. The first comes in the third chapter of Daniel. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are standing before King Nebuchadnezzar refusing to bow to the Golden image (idol) which the king had set up. A decree had gone forth that when music is played, all shall bow down. All those who refused to bow would be thrown into a fiery furnace. When the king confronts the three Hebrew boys, they won't bend to the king's decree. The king decides to give them one more chance and says, “If you don't bow, what God can deliver you out of my hand? Then they answer in one voice, “If it be so, the God we serve is able to deliver us from the fiery furnace and He will deliver us out of your hand O king. But if not, be it known unto you, O king, that we do not serve your Gods, nor will we worship the golden image which you have set up.”

On the surface, it seemed that they were saying, “Whether God delivers us or not, we still are not going to bow.” That almost sounds right; however, if we take this as the interpretation, we are saying, whether or not God keeps His word to us, we will not compromise our allegiance to Him. That might sound good to some folk, but the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ain't having it! As we stated earlier, God keeps His Word!

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers them out of them all.” (Psalms 34:19)

“Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you.” (Deut. 31:6)

“For the Lord your God is a merciful God; He will not abandon you and destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers, which He swore to them by oath.” (Deut. 7:8)

“Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will surely help you; I will uphold you with the Right hand of my righteousness. (Isa. 41:10)

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you (not if) go through the rivers, they will not overwhelm you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, and the flames will not set you ablaze!” (Isa 43:2)

“Do not be afraid of them for I am with you to deliver you says the Lord.” (Jer. 1:8)

“I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never turn away from doing them good...” (Jer. 32:40)

## The Proper Faith Response

When the three Hebrew boys said, “If it be so,” they were referring to what the king said. “If it be so that you throw us in the fire, be it known unto you that the God we serve is able to deliver us from the fiery furnace and **He will** deliver us out of your hand. Then they said, “but if not” which refers to “If it be so.” In other words, if you don’t throw us in the fire, we still won’t bow! (Glory be to God forevermore!) That’s why the king became so angry. Standing on the Word of God, (in this case, Isaiah 43:2) they had a definite word from God. They obeyed that word and persevered through the conflict that came because of their obedience! That is faith! Insight, agreement, and obedience! The God we serve is able and He will deliver me out of the hand of the enemy!

Now, if you’re speaking confidently of something that is God’s will, then this Scripture is not the one to use to allude to the thought that God may not come through. Shadrach, Meschach, and Abednego had total confidence it was God’s will and that he would always come through because of the covenant He had with His chosen people. As a matter of fact, the very reason Judah went into captivity was because God kept His Word!

You cannot use Daniel chapter three to say “Even if God does not deliver me, yet I will trust Him,” without seriously impugning His character. It’s like trying to insert what Job said (“Though He slays me, yet will I trust Him.”) into a totally different situation. You need to remember that, even with Job, he later learned it was not God slaying him, but his adversary, the devil. Job, himself said, after hearing accurately from God, before I had only heard about you, but now I know you. This was after God revealed to Job the truth of His impeccable character. If you are searching for a Scripture to support the above theological construct that, even if God does not come through (deliver), you will still trust him, perhaps you should look at a different story, like Esther.

After Haman the Agagite manipulated King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) into making a decree to annihilate the Jews, the king sent out letters to all the provinces from India to Ethiopia informing them of edict that had been sealed (signed into law).

“And the letters were sent by couriers into all the king’s provinces, to destroy, to kill, and annihilate all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their possession.”

(Esther 3:13)

Upon hearing the news, Mordecai, Esther’s cousin and legal guardian, tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes and began to cry out bitterly right at the king’s gate. The Jews in every province fasted, wept and wailed! When Esther heard of it, she sent garments to clothe Mordecai, but he would not take them nor could he be comforted. Queen Esther sent one of her attendees to inquire why Mordecai was making such a commotion. Mordecai told the attendant to inform Esther of all that the king had decreed and to tell her to go before the king to plead their case.

Esther then responds:

# The Proper Faith Response

“All the king’s servants and the people of the king’s provinces know that if any man or woman who goes into the inner court to the king, who has not been called, he has but one law: put all to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter, that he may live. Yet I myself have not been called to go in to the king these thirty days.”

(Esther 4:11)

**Mordecai Responds:** See Esther 4:14

**Esther Replied:** See Esther 4:16

Now notice the difference between Esther and the three Hebrew boys.

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The Hebrew boys were brought to the king because of defiance to worship the Idol gods and to bow before the golden image.

Esther said, “Fast and pray for me. I don’t know if He the king will let me come before him uninvited.”

The Hebrew boys said, whether you decide to throw us in or not, we have already decided we are not going to be forced to bow down because in response to what you just said to us, the God we serve is able to deliver us from the fiery furnace and He will deliver us out of your hand. We have His Word on it: the Blood Covenant!

Esther basically said, if it is God’s will that I die for my people, I’ll die.

“And so I will go to the king, which is against the Law; and if I perish, I perish!”

Esther had resolved herself to doing whatever was necessary to win deliverance for her people, the Jews. However, in her case, she entertained the thought that she might die in the process, but either way, she would take the chance. Even though she served God, she did not have a confident expectation that her mission would be successful. She did not speak of God’s willingness and ability; instead, she pointed out the law of Persia. She chose to oppose the law even on the high probability of death.

The Hebrew boys said, “O King, knock yourself out!” (Paraphrasing) No God can deliver like our God!”

**King Ahasuerus’ reponse** (Esther ask what you will up to half my kingdom...you sweet thing you! ☺) **-vs- Nebuchadnezzar’s response** (“Make the fire seven times hotter...because I’m madder than H...!)

# The Proper Faith Response

***NEVER BRING GOD'S WORD (PROMISES) DOWN TO YOUR EXPERIENCE, TAKE YOUR EXPERIENCE UP TO THE LEVEL OF GOD'S WORD!***

The second story that has given many people trouble is recorded in Matthew 8:1-4.

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John 6:37

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