**Daniel 3:8-18 Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews. 9 They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “O king, live forever! 10 You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the gold image; 11 and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. 12 There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up.” 13 Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king. 14 Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up? 15 Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?” 16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17 If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. 18 But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.”**

We’re back in Daniel 3 this evening. Recall with me that there has been a great image erected in the plain of Dura, which is 25 miles from the city of Babylon. All of the top officials have been summoned to the dedication of this image. The image itself is over 90 feet tall and 9 feet wide. The king has ordered that, when any kind of music is heard, the people will fall down and worship this image of gold. Making the image of gold is in direct rebellion to what God had graciously revealed in the dream in Daniel 2 and seems to suggest that Nebuchadnezzar is trying to rewrite the future and cause his kingdom of gold to continue forever. But we know that when God says it, it will come to pass – Ezekiel 12:25 *For I am the Lord. I speak, and the word which I speak will come to pass; it will no more be postponed; for in your days, O rebellious house, I will say the word and perform it,” says the Lord God.*’

 We left last week with the music playing and all the officials falling down and worshiping the golden image. We find that in this day and time as well. Good is being called evil and evil good, right is being deemed wrong and wrong right. People are being pressured to give in to the things they know to be against God’s word, all in order to get along. We’re being asked to pretend like the emperor has clothes on… but the emperor has no clothes and those who point this out are being persecuted and hated for it.

 In verses 8-9 *Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews. 9 They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “O king, live forever!* The music started and all bowed down and worshipped, except some. And immediately, within just a few minutes of this event, Chaldeans drew near to Nebuchadnezzar and accused the Jews. These are very likely some of the same Chaldeans who were exposed as liars and charlatans, fakes in chapter 2. They have revenge on their minds. They begin with “O king, live forever!” This is a common greeting like “long live the queen” in England.

 Verses 10-11 *You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the gold image; 11 and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.* The Chaldeans remind the king of his decree. This is important and will be very similar to the approach used when Daniel refuses to worship false gods in Daniel 6. The Chaldeans know that devout Jews will not bow the knee to false gods, and they use this against the Jews… just as people today will use this against devout Christians… trying to force evil agendas with the threat of punishment. The same will be true of the end times with the mark of the beast and those who do not receive the mark will be excluded from buying and selling. Satan will always use worldly things to persecute those bound for heaven.

 After reminding him of his decree, they remind him of the punishment. Whoever doesn’t fall down and worship is to be immediately thrown into the fiery furnace.

 Verse 12 *There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up.”* The Chaldeans now name names - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. Of course, we recall that they were promoted, while Daniel sat in the kings gate, in chapter 2 after the dream had been interpreted. This was a prime opportunity for the king to remember how good God had been to him and stop this nonsense, but pride and self-importance consumed him instead.

The Chaldeans point out that the Jews do not pay due regard to him, and they do not serve his gods and they do not worship the image. Listen to what they are saying – King, you honored them, and they dishonor you. You gave them position and they won’t even bow down. Look at how they belittle and fail to appreciate you. Their whole effort was to enrage the king.

Verse 13 *Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king.* The plan worked – Nebuchadnezzar, who we’ve seen fly into a rage before, listens to the Chaldeans, who Daniel saved from being executed, and flies into a violent anger again. He orders Meshach, Shadrach, and Abed-Nego to be brought before him. Meshach, Shadrach, and Abed-Nego were there on the plain of Dura – to be present did not compromise their faith. We too are commanded to follow the direction of the government as long as it does not violate Biblical principles. Acts 4:19 says - *But Peter and John answered and said to them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge.* We must carefully discern whether it is the Word of God we are following or self when we reach a place of disagreement with man’s law.

Verses 14-15 *Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up? 15 Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?”* The three are brought before the king and he asks, “Is it true?” He then gives them a second opportunity – if you are ready now… he is also looking to save face… surely they will not rebel here in front of him! To be sure, he reminds them of the cost of non-compliance. All they have to do is bow the knee. Then he asks - *who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?* Defiance, arrogance! It is reminiscent of 2 Kings 18 – when Sennacherib boasted against God when Hezekiah reigned and we recall the God that showed up for deliverance there! 2 Kings 19:35 *And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the Lord went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses—all dead.*

Now we hear Meshach, Shadrach, and Abed-Nego answer in verses 16-18. It is one of the most beautiful answers in all of scripture. *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17 If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. 18 But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.”* The KJV says *We are not careful to answer*. No minced words here for sure – they are straight to the point – no second chance is needed – they understood the first go round and made their decision based on the unchanging word of God. If the king decides to throw them into the furnace, God will deliver. Once again, Nebuchadnezzar is introduced to the Living God and has an opportunity to bow his heart to God. Nebuchadnezzar had said – bow to me or else. These three young men of faith, probably only in their early 20s, give the king the Truth – regardless, we will not worship the image or your gods. They placed their life in God’s hand for His purposes and were content die obeying God. Acts 5:29 *But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: “We ought to obey God rather than men.* They were at peace. They rejected the world and served God.

We too must *obey God rather than men.* Once again, we see incredible Faith, Focus, and Fearlessness in these young men. We too must stand on what God has commanded. This week, let’s make up our minds that we would rather endure a fiery furnace than disobey God. Like Meshach, Shadrach, and Abed-Nego, we follow the rules of man as long as they do not violate the commands of God and, as far as it depends on us, we seek to live at peace with all men. But, when push comes to shove, tis better to be shoved into a fiery furnace than to bow to the ungodly things of this world. May we never bow to any other than God, may He find us faithfully waiting when He makes His return.