***Daniel 3:19-30 Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. 20And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, and cast them into the burning fiery furnace. 21Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 22Therefore, because the king’s command was urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. 23And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 24Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, “Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?” They answered and said to the king, “True, O king.” 25“Look!” he answered, “I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” 26Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke, saying, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here.” Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire. 27And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king’s counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them. 28Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God! 29Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this.” 30Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.***

 We’re back with Meshach, Shadrach, and Abed-Nego tonight. Recall with me that they were summoned to the plain where the great image created by Nebuchadnezzar stands. When the music started, everyone fell down, except…. Now, they’ve been summoned before the king. He gives them a second chance to kneel, worship, go along to get along. We left them as they gave this beautiful answer to Nebuchadnezzar, an answer that I hope, if I’m ever faced with a similar choice, I will give – Faithful, Fearless, Focused – Brave and Courageous - *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.* Nebuchadnezzar – we don’t need to give this thought. We know our God. It is God we will worship and Him alone and He will deliver us one way or the other.

 Can you imagine how this infuriates a king that is used to being feared and has just been worshipped as a god? His pride, his ego… this is a great example of why God hates pride – Proverbs 6 names 7 abominations, 6 things God hates – the very first one is a proud look. James 4:6 reminds *God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble*. Here, we have prideful Nebuchadnezzar and humble Meshach, Shadrach, and Abed-Nego. We’re about to see God resist the proud and walk in the fire with the humble.

 Verse 19 - *Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated.*Rage, like a petulant child, at being told no. We’ve probably all had the experience of someone being enraged and seeing how it changes the features – veins pop out, cords on the neck stand up, eyes bulge, the face gets red – In modern times, we’d say he has an anger management issue. This was a man used to speaking and people hopping and here were three humble young men simply saying – no. Heat that furnace seven times hotter. I found the number 7 to be interesting here – it represents perfect completion. At the king’s order, oil and chaff would have been added and billows used to super heat the fire.

 Verses 20-21 *And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, and cast them into the burning fiery furnace. 21Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.*The three were seized, bound fully clothed, and cast into the fiery furnace immediately. This is an important note, and we shouldn’t miss the chance to think on this – think how flammable garments would be. Easily burned.

 Verses 22-23 *Therefore, because the king’s command was urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. 23And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.* Notice the king’s lack of concern for anything but destroying these three. The mighty men were killed by the flames just by approaching the furnace – they gave their lives in service to this petulant, prideful tyrant. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego fell down, bound into the midst of the flames, seven times hotter, raging inferno, killing men by just being in the area of the fire.

 Verses 24 *Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, “Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?” They answered and said to the king, “True, O king.”* The king is looking forward to seeing the three burst into flames and hearing their screams of torment as they are burned alive for their disobedience. I can almost see his eyes gleaming and dancing, as he watches the flames. Then, something happens that astonishes him – did we not cast 3 men bound in? 3 men – bound – don’t let that be lost on us – bound, helpless, captive, cast into flames. And the counselors, the ones who wanted these three dead as well, answer – True, O King.

 Verse 25 *“Look!” he answered, “I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” I see four men loose* – There is a fourth man. The 3 are loose, free, walking about in the flames. They aren’t hurt – they are communing. God does not forget His children. Christ, pre-incarnate. Christ reveals Himself, comes and unbinds the captive – as He said with Lazarus – Loose him and set him free. As He says to all who believe, loose them and set them free. I see 4. None are hurt. One is like the *the Son of God.* The flames hold no power in the presence of Jesus. We have to wonder – how did Nebuchadnezzar know the Son of God? Romans 2:15 says in part – *The gentiles show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness*. The king had seen Truth and Righteousness in these three and Daniel. His heart spoke of what he knew to be true.

 Verse 26 *Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke, saying, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here.” Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire.* The king goes near and calls. He saw them go into the fire as what he considered his servants. He sees them come out of the fire knowing that they are God’s servants. The king acknowledges, though we know he will rebel again and forget all too soon, they are God’s servants in the sun and rain, in calm and in fire, in the fair weather and in the storms.

 Take a moment and realize that the 3 had complete Joy in the presence of Jesus. Some ask why they didn’t come out the minute they were unbound – when we are in the presence of Jesus, the real question is why they would ever want to leave His side to come out? They’d be content to remain as Psalm 16:11 says - *You will show me the path of life;* ***In Your presence is fullness of joy****; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

Verse 27 *And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king’s counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on**them****.*** Reluctantly I’ve no doubt, they emerge from the fire, leaving the presence of Jesus behind. All the elite are gathered to see these three men emerge, untouched, unsinged, to the point that they didn’t even smell like smoke. The mightiest men had fallen dead at the entrance of the fire without Jesus. These three walked through and the fire had no power, in the presence of Jesus. We are the same when we encounter fires in our life.

 Verses 28-30 *Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God! 29Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this.” 30Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.* The king acknowledges the power of God, the deliverance of Christ, and the faith of these three men. This is a great start. But then, Nebuchadnezzar makes a decree that is as against God as his decree to worship the image. If anyone speaks against God, kill them and make their houses an ash heap! God is not the god of forced worship. He is the God of Choice. He searches for those that worship Him in Spirit and in Truth, who surrender to His will, and serve willingly and from a place of Joy. Nebuchadnezzar sees the Power of God, but doesn’t understand the Person of God. We must understand the Person of God – it’s only there that we find the Peace of God, the Protection of God, and the Providence of God.

 Faithful, Fearless, and Focused – in these times, we are blessed to see the example of Daniel and his three friends. May we believe, even unto death, when faced with the fiery furnace of this wicked world. May we give account so others might hear. May we be an astonishing witness as we walk with Jesus through the fires.