THRIVE – **WK 4 – Burnin’ up in Babylon**

**Today a familiar story if you’ve been to Sunday School – 3 boys refuse to bow and are tossed in the fire to burn. Not a fairy tale.**

**Rewind: Daniel and friends (13-14 yrs old) kidnapped, castrated, names changed, forced to study the occult, and serve an evil king in Babylon (a great & evil cities of its time).**

**Despite that it was unexpected, and incredibly difficult –**

**knowing God is good and in control they – THRIVED!**

**They lived as if they know the ending of the story!**

**This series is about, How to Thrive in a place we don’t belong**

**How to live a life of Hope, humility, and wisdom – never compromising.**

**Last week: Daniel is promoted after interpreting a dream –**

**Daniel promotes his 3 friends. They all work for corporate.**

**But Nebuchadnezzar is still crazy, self-obsessed and maniacal.**

**His dream was of a statue gave Neb. An idea – let’s build one… Daniel 3:1 King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, sixty cubits high and six cubits wide, (90ft high / 90 ft wide – most likely - obelisk) and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. (north Babylon) 2 He then summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up. (All of Neb staff were to be there – they come and all stood in front of it.)**

**(A Maniacal Decree) 4 Then the herald loudly proclaimed, “Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do: 5 As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. 6 Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.” (It’s been a few years up to this point - They are doing good. Comfortable - promoted – respected – had authority – don’t cause waves…)**

**\* Our faith needs to be shaken when we get comfortable**

**I think there are times when God (who is always in control) allows our faith to be tested and strengthened.**

**When we get comfortable – we are not moving forward. Faith is the fuel for our life. When we stop walking in trust and reliance on God – we hit cruise control. God wants us living in a place of trust and surrender to his provision and plan. Done by shaking! Sifting**

**There is a whole lotta shaken going on for some of you**

**They are told - YOU WILL BOW – and the music plays…**

**Daniel 3:7 Therefore, as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp and all kinds of music, all the nations and peoples of every language fell down and worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. (they all bow – like robots – they go along – a grand spectacle… almost…)**

**8 At this time some astrologers came forward and denounced the Jews. (same guys Daniel saved – BTW Daniel is telling the story – but was not present.) 9 They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “May the king live forever! 10 Your Majesty has issued a decree… 12 But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon -Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego- who pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up.”** **(For some reason their knees did not work.)**

**Daniels 3 friends: Hananiah - Lord is gracious / Mishael – Lord is Strong / Azariah – Lord is our help. To make them forget the God of their fathers, they’re given new names: Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego (all names of worship to pagan gods)**

**They made a monumental decision that day to not bow to that monument - Faith was all they had - everything was shaken.**

**They had to decide – are we going to do? Compromise what we know. Do what everyone else does? Give in to the pressure? It’s just motions – after all, we are senior leadership. Should we cause waves, God knows our heart?**

**This is true in our Babylon too - work, school, family… peer pressure. Are going to fit in or stand out?**

**\* Life is filled w/ defining moments that define our walk w/ God**

**They were faced with social pressure (everyone else is doing it) and political pressure (civil disobedience)**

**Your faith will be tested, it’s those moments that expose us to be genuine or a copy. (1 Peter 1:3-9). They define our walk with God. How we respond is evidence if you are for real or fake.**

**Reality is - Christianity is a call to be set apart, not to blend in**

**(like video) 1 John 4:4 - Greater is he in us than he that is in the world.**

**Daniel 3:13 Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So, these men were brought before the king, 14 and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true… that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? (if it wasn’t clear before it is clear now – they serve the LORD God alone) 15 Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. (I’ll give you another chance. Set a corporate example – even if you don’t believe it - simple policy – see the statue / hear the music / bow. Neb would have killed anyone else – but, he like them) But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?” (there is nothing that save you…) 16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him…**

**BTW - They did it together – no solo. This is where we often fail. I don’t need help, I have Google. Big part of their courage was they had each other – Life Teams**

**16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, “King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. (we don’t have to explain to you) 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand.**

**\* We do not need to defend ourselves when we take a stand for God**

**We don’t have to post why on Facebook – write a letter – call everyone to explain – tell our side.**

**When we defend ourselves - we tend to become judgmental of others. We don’t have to defend our position, we just need to stand and live it!**

**Personal examples – of not defending ourselves.**

**We knew who is in charge. God will deal with it.**

**(we like v17 – but not the next) 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”**

**\* We must accept that God does not always intervene**

**They could look back in life and see it - trials & pain followed them. Abducted and forced into a difficult life. They knew, but still wouldn’t…**

**God does not always deliver us from the fire – sometimes there is purpose in the furnace. God does not guarantee freedom from suffering and trials in this life.**

**The “no matter what” clause: No matter what – we will not bow.**

**6 words – “But even if he does not…” (Romans 8:38-39)**

**Even if it does not turn out good – even if I lose my job – have no friends – family won’t talk to me. I will stand for God – no matter what. Come rain or shine – I will serve the LORD God!**

**You might live a pure life – take a stand for God and you still get fired… are you still going to serve Him? You go to church every week – you pray & know God’s word – but your kids still don’t follow God… are you still going to serve him? You serve God faithfully help others and care for others – but they / you are still not healed**

**“even if he does not…” This is where our faith is lived out.**

**NT Paul wrote 1/3, man of God. His life was filled w/ trials and trust (beaten, wiped, starved, homeless, attacked, ship wrecked… (2 Cor 11) God does not promise full salvation in this life – but in the life to come.**

**The physical fires – what about emotional fires? Loneliness, abandonment, depression, anxiety, discouragement.**

**Romans 5:1Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. (we boast in the hope of heaven) 3 Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. (drop the mic verse)**

**No matter what - we have peace of God knowing we have the glory of heaven and the fact that God is working in you endurance, character, & hope. The world needs to see this.**

**As David ran for his life – a fugitive of another angry king - he wrote - Psalm 27:1** **The LORD is my light and my salvation-- whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life-- of whom shall I be afraid?**

**Those three young men – stood for the LORD God and did not bow to the culture and the peer pressure around them... They feared, respected, and treasured God more than any person.**

* **What are you afraid of losing if you take a stand?**

**Daniel 3:19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. (nice at first – then enraged) He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual 20 and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. (hotter than usual and stronger knots than usual) 21 So these men, (the 3) wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. 22 The king’s command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, (can you feel the heat of that fire!) 23 and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.**

**They took a stand and were literally – Fired!**

**\* Sometimes it gets hotter – before it gets better**

**The heat was turned up! Just when things could not get worse.**

**Sometimes you get burned, before it gets better. The heat is on**

**Maybe like them – you took a stand and you’re now feeling and taken the heat. Are you in the furnace? What is your fire?**

**Verse 18 is real – sometimes we die for our faith – millions do every year around the world. And – sometimes…God intervenes…**

**Daniel 3:24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, “Weren’t there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?” They replied, “Certainly, Your Majesty.” 25 He said, “Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed,**

**Notice the fire burned away the things that bound them – it freed them. Much like, how God frees us by allowing us to go thru the fires – in the fire we see what is important and to see God better**

**25 He said, “Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.” (son of god, not human)**

**Can you imagine that moment… “walking around in the fire” Whoa this is cool – hey, who’s he? Did you say Yeshua? Hi!**

**26 Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, “Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!” (What is going on?! Come here!) So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, 27 and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them. (they didn’t even smell like it)**

**I want to be like that - when I go thru the fire – I don’t want the fire to leave its remnant on me. I won’t be jaded or stink. I don’t want to smell like the smoke that burned me. I will forgiveness!**

**Daniel 3:25 He said, “Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.” (Neb didn’t know who or what it was – only that is was not human. We know… it was Jesus!!)**

**\* When God does intervene, it is always to point to Jesus!**

**This is one of those moments when God delivers. The moments we hang our hat on and look back at. We remember when…**

**We have those moments… It all goes back to the forth man.**

**Jesus you did this – you were there with me!**

**We may not always have intervention in this life - But as Jesus delivered them from the fire – so Jesus delivers us from a fire. The fire of sin and self-destruction – the reality of hell as described in the bible.**

**Jesus on the cross of Calvary, delivered you from the flames of judgement – if you will turn to him.**

**Daniel 3:28 Then Nebuchadnezzar said, “Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king’s command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. 29 Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way.” (btw - this is a great example of how govt mandated religion is never a good idea) 30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon. (they took a stand and were promoted again)**

**The faith to obey God in big trials, is often prepare in advance by being obedient in lesser trials. There stand in the cafeteria (ch1) gave them the courage to stand in the mass crowd.**

**Questions to ponder as we leave:**

* **Will you bow when the pressures on or will you stand up?**
* **Are you willing to go thru the fire?**
* **If God does not deliver you, will you keep serving Him?**
* **What fire are you going through? Jesus is there!**

**Bible study**

**1 Peter 1:3-9**