

INTRODUCTION:

1. This morning, we're in msg #4 of our series entitled (**PP**) "Countering Culture." | "Courage to Go Against the Culture"
2. A Series through the 1st 6 chapters of the book of Daniel... this series is about the prophet Daniel ... and friends...
 1. How he (how they) lived surrendered lives to God, in the midst of living in a strange land – Babylon.
 2. And that's the key... living surrendered to God = living in a way that counters the culture that we're in...
3. This morning, we'll encounter the lives of 3 of Daniel's friends, whom we know best by Shadrach, Meshach, Abedengo
 1. They'll face an INTENSE situation where their faith & their culture collide.
 2. In CH2 we saw how Daniel **processed & responded** when confronted w/ the unexpected/uncertain/scary
 3. In CH3, we'll see how Shadrach, Meshach, Abedengo **process & respond** the unexpected/uncertain/scary
4. We'll be in the **NKJV** this morning.
 1. We'll glean 3 lessons that lend themselves as a clear examples of countering culture/following Jesus
 2. Let's jump into Daniel 3 (**NKJV**)

DANIEL 3:

*¹Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. ² And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. ³ So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. ⁴ Then a herald cried aloud: "To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, ⁵ that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, **flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery**, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; ⁶ and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."*

⁷ So at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, and lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

⁸ 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."

1. A little bit of Context / Explanation...
 1. Earlier in the book we were introduced to King Nebuchadnezzar
 2. Daniel had revealed & interpreted his vision of a multi-metallic statute (ch2)
 3. Neb was the head of gold.... and, now 16yrs have passed between ch 2 & 3
2. Neb was told he was the head of gold, so what does he do? — he makes a whole statue of gold

1. It's huge — 90ft tall / 9 feet wide—— Don't think Lincoln memorial // think Washington monument
2. Get's a ROCKING worship team together / all the key ppl /when band plays EVERYONE must honor the king
 1. If they don't — they're dead //thrown into a blazing/fiery furnace
 2. Rad, Shack, & Benny — they don't do it — King hears about it — What can we learn?
3. **(PP) Choose to be Good in EXAMPLE, Not Good with EXCUSES**
 1. Everyone was bowing down —— at this moment faith & culture collide
 1. If there was ever a moment to begin to rationalize the commands of God, now is that time.
 2. The KING is HOT ... The FURNACE is HOT ... And if they don't obey, they will be NOT ... incinerated
 2. They're at a moment of GREAT temptation... to rationalize ... to make excuses for a lack of obedience.
 3. These 3 Jewish boys, were good Jewish boys
 1. They knew the heart of God & the commands of God — They knew they were called to OBEY God.
 2. They knew **(PP)** Exodus 20.4 *"You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; ⁵ you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.*
 4. But, set yourself in their sandals:
 1. They're standing there w/ the heat of a blazing fire in their face
 2. They've got everything to lose — Their reputation — Their position — Their lives
 5. They could've been thinking ... maybe just this 1x...
 1. They could've made a case for situational ethics
 1. In this situation it would be all right to bow down b/c we'll get killed if we don't.
 2. Certainly God would not these young boys who loved Him to die would He?
 2. Or, maybe they could've made a cultural case for it:
 1. The Babylonians are not going to understand the laws of our God.
 2. We don't want to offend our culture & ruin our opportunity for a witness.
 3. We will bow now so they will listen to us later... besides no one we know will even see this.
 3. Or maybe, they could've rationalized w/ God's forgiveness:
 1. Ever been in that place?
 2. Could've said, "We have a loving God who is slow to anger, and quick to forgive.
 3. We'll just bow this one time, I mean, God will forgive, these Babylonians will not.
 4. They could've been tempted to make a silent protest
 1. What's that?
 2. *"We will kneel on the outside, but we will be standing and worshipping the true God on the inside, in our hearts. God will understand."*
 6. They could've come up with a 1,000 different excuses...— can't we do the same thing?
 7. Reminds me of the famous phrase by Ben Franklin — *He that is good for excuses, is seldom good for anything else.*
 8. You have to make a choice
 1. **(PP) Joshua 24.14-15** *choose this day whom you will serve.*

2. **(PP) 2 Corinthians 3.2-3** ² *You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men;* ³ *clearly you are an epistle of Christ,*

3. We are living epistles

1. You're the only Bible some people will ever read — Be a good translation...
2. May we lead lives of EXAMPLES of trust & faith in God.

9. When given opportunity to obey

1. Here's our first lesson — what it looks like to COUNTER CULTURE... to follow JESUS
2. **Choose to be Good in EXAMPLE, Not Good with EXCUSES**
3. King Neb finds out that they Rad, Shack, & Benny aren't bowing ... so what happens?

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."

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. **20** 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. **21** Then 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. **22** 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. **23** And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

1. Old Gnarly Neb is HOT

1. He has Rad, Shack, & Benny brought b4 him, & gives them a 2nd chance
 1. It was one thing to obey God in the midst of a crowd
 2. Now, they have to obey God in direct defiance of the king

2. But did you catch their response?

1. We do not need to defend ourselves — our mind is made up. V16-18
2. They knew what they were gonna do b4 they got before the king

3. How were they able to STAND? How were they able to make this kind of decision under this kind of pressure?

1. They had settled this situation before they got in this situation
2. Here's the 2nd lesson we learn from this text... what it looks like to COUNTER CULTURE... to follow JESUS

2. (PP) We can STAND, when we settle things BEFOREHAND

1. You know we all have habits
 2. I've heard it said before that the way a habit works is through a: **Cue — Response — Reward**
 1. Let me give you an example — Positive thing:
 1. **Cue:** Alarm clock hits 6a
 2. **Response:** You're up
 1. Throw on your running shoes
 2. Hit the street or the gym and get your morning walk/run in
 3. **Reward:** Feel better— Use that time to pray... clear head & Staying healthy
 2. Negative: I'll share one of our past... struggles w/ you...
 1. I could be somewhere, & have something I want to talk w/ my wife about...
 2. So I'd give her a call... shoot her a text... another call... another text... I'm frustrated
 3. Here's the **Cue:** the phone isn't getting answered
 4. **Response:** Isn't always.... Understanding, love, patience,
 1. Why do we pay x \$ of dollars a month for a phone that we don't answer
 2. I'll ask that brilliant question
 5. **Reward:** There's no reward — just something we like to call intense fellowship
 3. Here's the point — Habits, they can work for yah or against yah
 1. But, there's this dynamic to them: **Cue + Response + Reward**
 2. In the life of Rad, Shack, & Benny they had worked **Godly Disciplines** into the **Rhythms** of their life
 3. So that when something wild came up (bow b4 me or burn) they knew what they were going to do.
 4. They could **STAND**, b/c they'd **settled** it **BEFOREHAND**
 4. In our lives, no matter what the CUE is, when our
 1. Response – Kingdom response
 2. Reward – Kingdom reward — the presence, the peace of God
3. Whatever you want **most** in life will be the thing that **drives** your **habits** — often what happens, is we exchange what we want **most** for what we want in the **moment**.
1. I recently heard a story about a pastor who lost 60+ lbs & kept it off... now for over 10+yrs...how do you do it?
 1. When I go to a restaurant, I know what I'm gonna order — If I don't, when I'm in that moment I'm gonna order something that I want... but I don't really want
 2. When I'm at any kind of party with a cake — I'll cut off a little sliver & then walk away — If I stay... I'll eat the whole cake.
 3. B/c I want it, but I don't really want it, he said the joy is in the 1st bite & each following bite, just isn't as good as the 1st
 4. B/c he's settled what he really wants he orders his life around what he's going to do.
 5. It's been said that what happens all too often is that we trade what we want most for what we want in the moment.

2. Imagine what our lives would look like if we settled beforehand what our lives would look like as it relates to
 1. The kingdom of God — and... how we face temptation or compromise
 2. We can stand in the face of compromise & difficult situations when we settle things... beforehand
3. As we live in those GOSPEL RYTHMS of: 10 / 4 / 1
 1. 1 — **NEW LIFE** is found in **JESUS** — GOSPEL — this is our **VISION**...
 2. 4 — **LIFE + LOVE + COMMUNITY + PURPOSE** — this is our **MISSION**
 1. **NEW LIFE** in **JESUS** — Gospel
 2. **LOVE God** — Great Commandment #1
 3. **CONNECTING Together** — Great Commandment #2
 4. **LIVING** on **MISSION** — Great Commission
 3. 10 **VALUES** ... habits... in SCRIPTURE... we follow/practice as individuals & as a community...

1. We PREACH Jesus	6. We receive COMMUNION
2. We are BAPTIZED	7. We live in COMMUNITY
3. We SING to God	8. We live to GIVE
4. We PRAY in the SPIRIT	9. We live to SERVE
5. We LEARN God's Word	10. We live on MISSION
4. This is the **GOOD** life...
 1. **GOSPEL**: Preaching Jesus & Baptism
 2. **GATHER**: Singing, Praying, Preaching, Learning, Serving, Giving, Communion, Community, Mission
 3. **GROUP**: Singing, Praying, Preaching, Learning, Serving, Giving, Communion, Community, Mission
 4. **GO**: into our world(s) — Gospel, Mission, Relationship
 5. Our Reward is **GOD**... walking w/ Him... the **GOD** life is the **GOOD** life!
5. Here's a question — What do you need to settle right now?
 1. So that when the temptation comes, when the compromise comes...
 1. In the moment, you don't have to think about it
 2. You've been trained to know what to do
 1. Like those in the military ... Like those in the medical community
 2. Their training guides them in the moment of chaos
 3. They know what to do... b/c it's been settled beforehand
 2. What do you need to settle? Where do you need to nail down a kingdom response to your cue?
 3. To enjoy the reward of the presence of God...
4. You've gotta love, respect, and learn from how Rad, Shack, & Benny respond in this compromising situation.
 1. They don't doubt God's ability, but they also don't assume to know God's will.
 2. *17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. 18 But even if he doesn't, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up."*
5. This is GOLD and a PEARL of wisdom for your life — **Never doubt God's ability, but Never assume God's will**

1. Sometimes, we can get it wrong
 1. We don't think God has the ability
 2. But, we think we know what God is doing
2. I'm gonna trust that God has the power and I'm gonna totally trust that God's sovereignty is good
 1. That's the life of freedom
 2. That's what it looks like to **to COUNTER CULTURE...** to actually **FOLLOW JESUS**
 1. **Choose to be Good in EXAMPLE, Not Good with EXCUSES**
 2. **STAND, b/c you settled things BEFOREHAND**
6. When Neb hears of this response ... He's furious... He binds them up
 1. He gets the best of his men to throw them into the fire, but in the act of throwing them in, they die...
 2. Look at what happens...

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." **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." **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. **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.

1. What do we learn here?
2. **(PP) His FAITHFULNESS is greater than any FIRE ...** and it's in the FIRE where HIS FAITHFULNESS is known...
 1. They went into the fire knowing that God could deliver, but weren't sure if He would
 2. When you make kingdom decisions in your life
 1. If you end up in a fire
 2. His faithfulness is **GREATER** than the fire & in the fire.
 3. Does that mean that **HE** will **ALWAYS** deliver you physically
 1. No, the history of the church is written with the lives of those who died for their faith
 2. Who had just as much faith as Rad, Shack, & Benny
 3. But, who like Stephen saw God's faithfulness in it and through it
 3. But, here's the reality
 1. When you make kingdom decisions in your life, His faithfulness is **GREATER** than the fire & in the fire.
 2. But, when you live a compromised life ... nobody is faithful
 3. Whatever you trusted ... whoever you trusted... that leads you into a compromised life... they will never be faithful.
3. Nebuchadnezzar is blown away by what he sees
 1. We threw 3 in, but there's 4 walking around ... & that 4th ... was none other than Jesus Christ Himself

2. So Neb calls to them and his tone changes a little...
 1. V26 – servants of the MOST HIGH GOD... come out!
 2. The crowd of officials surround them
3. What does it say about them?
 1. Saw that the fire had not touched them. Not a hair on their heads was singed, and their clothing was not scorched. They didn't even smell of smoke!
 2. But what was gone? The ropes that bound them — that's how God uses trials in our lives.
4. Look at how this closes...

28 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! 29 Therefore 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." 30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.

1. God gets all the glory!
2. His people are set FREE!

CONCLUSION & APPLICATION:

1. We glean 3 lessons from the lives of these men that lend themselves to COUNTERING CULTURE... following JESUS
 1. Choose to be Good in **EXAMPLE**, Not Good in **EXCUSES**
 2. We can **STAND**, when we settle things **BEFOREHAND**
 3. His **FAITHFULNESS** is greater than any **FIRE** ... and it's in the **FIRE** where HIS **FAITHFULNESS** is known...
2. These are not just life lessons for us, but this is who **JESUS** is — See Him in the text before us today !
3. Jesus is the one who through the **BEST EXAMPLE**, took the **STAND** & was **FAITHFUL** until the very end!
 1. *Jesus is the one who is the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*
 2. *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*
4. How do we **RESPOND** to this??? **Surrender** your life afresh to **JESUS**:
 1. **Realize, Recognize, Repent, Receive, & Release...**
 2. **Confess** w/ your mouth & **Believe** in your heart!
 3. **FOLLOW** Jesus!