**Sunday, January 17th, 2021**

**Daniel 3:1 & 3:7-18**

Marvin and Alicia had a daughter, Betsy, whom they loved very much.

When Betsy was nine years old she was diagnosed with diabetes.

The doctor began to prescribe the medicines she would need to take.

But Alicia and Marvin insisted they would pray for their daughter

and God would heal her.

The doctor tried to explain to them that with medications Betsy

          could live a long and productive life.

But the parents refused to listen to the doctor.

They took Betsy home and began to pray to God, asking him to heal her.

They trusted God could, and would, heal Betsy.

So they continued to pray to God for healing.

As time passed it was obvious that Betsy was getting worse, not better.

But her parents trusted God and continued to pray, refusing all medications.

However, one night Betsy died in her sleep.

Marvin and Alicia were devastated.

They had loved their daughter so much.

They could not understand why God had not healed Betsy,

          when they had such faith in Him.

The truest test of our faith is when God's answer is "No",

          when there is no healing, when there is no deliverance,

          when the house forecloses, when the job is lost,

          when a loved one never recovers, but dies,

          when we pour out our heart to God in prayer,

          and the heavens remain silent.

Is our faith still in God when the answer is No?

When there is no miracle?

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, told King Nebuchadnezzar:

          "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace,

          the God we serve is able to deliver us from it.

          But even if he does not, we want you to know,

          we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

They stood up to King Nebuchadnezzar,

          refusing to bow down to the tall golden image,

          even when their lives were at stake.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, stood on the brink

          of being thrown into a fiery furnace because of their faith in God,

          and their refusal to bow down to a false god.

They did not pretend to know what was going to happen to them.

Although the three had no desire to burn,

          they did not claim that they would not die.

They faithfully trusted God even in the face of death.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego honestly said:

          "We really do not know what will happen to us.

          We do not know if we will live, or if we will die.

          We only know that we will trust God, and we will obey Him."

They trusted the Lord completely.

They were committed to God no matter what the outcome would be.

Even if God chose not to deliver them the way they desired,

          they were determined to stand firm and be faithful.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did come out of the fiery furnace unharmed.

Even King Nebuchadnezzar began to see how powerful their God was.

Sometimes God doesn't deliver us from the fire,

          but instead, is with us in the fire.

He has promised to be with us, always.

Far from home and in dangerous circumstances,

          Daniel also held on tightly to his faith.

He pointed himself toward the promised land three times each day in prayer.

Not even the threat of death in the lions' den,

          could cause him to stop talking with God.

Faith is not trust in what we want to happen.

Faith is knowing God is with us whatever happens.

Faith is not telling God what to do.

Faith is trusting God is with us in the tough times.

As we read through the Bible, we discover many people

          who did not receive the answer they requested.

But they obeyed God even when they did not know what the outcome would be.

Often it seems as though God doesn't answer our prayers.

Other times God answers our prayers very directly.

Sometimes the answer is "yes".

Sometimes it is "no".

And sometimes it is "wait".

As we worship, and pray, and trust God, each day,

          we discover peace and joy, whatever happens in our lives.

AMEN