INTRODUCTION

A. In seminary I took several pastoral counseling classes.
   1. We were expected to write case studies on the counseling opportunities we had.
   2. A case study is an intensive analysis of what a person says or does. The goal is to identify patterns of behavior.
   3. Last month the CDC published a case study showing that a person with mild respiratory symptoms attended a funeral and a birthday party that facilitated the spread of Covid-19 in Chicago.
   4. It’s amazing how one person’s actions can impact so many others.

B. Today I want us to look at another case study, not about the Coronavirus but about faith.
   1. What does faith look like in action?
   2. Although it’s helpful to define faith it’s much more effective to see a practical application of it.
   3. Our case study focuses not just on just one person but three.
   4. They were Israelites being held captive in Babylon while their faith was being challenged.
   5. How did they display faith under such hostile conditions?
   6. What does their example teach us today about how to demonstrate our faith?
I. FIRST, FAITH ONLY MEANS SOMETHING WHEN YOU STICK TO IT.

A. These young men had their faith challenged in two specific ways.

1. First there was the issue of eating royal food—1:8 and 11-12.

   **Daniel 1:8**
   But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.

   **Daniel 1:11-12**
   11 Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, 12 “Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink.

2. Then there was the challenge to worship a statue—3:11-12.

   **Daniel 3:11-12**
   11 The King of Babylon issued a law that whoever does not fall down and worship a pagan image of gold will be thrown into a blazing furnace. 12 But Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to worship this idol.”

3. In spite of the consequence they stuck by their faith—3:17.

   **Daniel 3:17**
   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.

B. Have you ever been challenged to compromise your faith? How did you do?

II. SECOND, GOD IS MORE CONCERNED WITH OUR CONDUCT THAN OUR COMFORT.

A. In spite of the threat of death by fire, these men remained true to their faith

   **Daniel 3:18**
   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.”

B. The lesson for us is that God is concerned with our conduct too in the face of hardship.

   **2 Corinthians 4:17-18**
   17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.
III. THIRD, FIERY FURNISES ARE THE NORM AND NOT THE EXCEPTION.

A. God didn’t exempt these men from personal hardship.

**Daniel 3:21**
So these men were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace.

B. Neither does God exempt us from personal hardships.

**Job 14:1**
“People live but a few days that are full of trouble.

**Ecclesiastes 2:23**
All our days of work is grief and pain....

**John 16:33**
.........In this world you will have trouble.....

IV. FOURTH, WHEN THE HEAT IS ON, GOD IS PRESENT.

A. God was with these three faithful men

**Daniel 3:24-25**
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, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.”

B. God also promises to be with us too

**Isaiah 43:2**
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.
V. FIFTH, FIERY FURNISES MAKE US BITTER OR BETTER.

A. These three men were praised for their faith.

Daniel 3:28
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.

B. Personal testing strengthens our faith.

1 Peter 1:6-7
6 In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

CONCLUSION

A. We’re writing our own case study in faith today? What will it reveal?

B. When the heat is on will we remain faithful? We’re the only one who can answer this.