Series: Standing Firm in Love

Series Text: 1st Corinthians 16:13-14

February 3, 2019

Message 1:

**Grace and Truth**

Daniel 1:1-14

1st Corinthians 16:13-14 - Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong. And do everything with love.

**Intro:** We are living in a culture that is increasing moving away from God.

How are we going to live - godly lives of love, grace & truth in this culture? How are we going to love people who are so culturally different from us, and are moving our culture in the opposite direction than we would like it to go as believers?

We were founded to be one nation, under God. But we are far from that and moving farther away.

Daniel’s people were defeated and taken away as slaves -

If America continues on its path, we are headed for a kind of slavery. It may not be defeat from another nation and taken into physical slavery as they were - but our nation is already enslaved to ways of thinking and ways of living that are contrary to the freedom of spirit and soul that God wants every person to have.

Daniel 1:1-6 - During the third year of King Jehoiakim’s reign in Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. The Lord gave him victory over King Jehoiakim of Judah and permitted him to take some of the sacred objects from the Temple of God. So Nebuchadnezzar took them back to the land of Babylonia and placed them in the treasure-house of his god.

Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, his chief of staff, to bring to the palace some of the young men of Judah’s royal family and other noble families, who had been brought to Babylon as captives. “Select only strong, healthy, and good-looking young men,” he said. “Make sure they are well versed in every branch of learning, are gifted with knowledge and good judgment, and are suited to serve in the royal palace. Train these young men in the language and literature of Babylon.” The king assigned them a daily ration of food and wine from his own kitchens. They were to be trained for three years, and then they would enter the royal service.

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were four of the young men chosen, all from the tribe of Judah.

Daniel and these other 3 were members of the Jewish royal family - they were from the nobility - they were wise, sharp, and they were brought into the king’s house to be indoctrinated into the language and literature of Babylon.

They also were given food that was against the dietary rules of the Israelites - and this food had been offered in sacrificial worship to the Babylonian false gods.

The Babylonians chose these YOUNG PEOPLE - people of the next generation - to CHANGE THEIR CULTURE!

Understand how important this is!

Culture has an agenda! Satan uses culture to have his way in all of us!

Daniel 1:7 - The chief of staff renamed them with these Babylonian names:

Daniel was called Belteshazzar.

Hananiah was called Shadrach.

Mishael was called Meshach.

Azariah was called Abednego.

They were slaves - their names were changed -

Names are a sign of ownership -

ROOTS - Kunte Kinte ——-> Toby

You have a name that your parents gave you - you are living according to some name - there is something you believe about yourself.

Are you believing what culture says about you - or are you believing and living by what God says about you?

**> Culture wants to change our identity.**

Culture wants us to believe something about ourselves that is not true!

My brother - James Robert - from Dad & his Dad - we are Blankenships!

Me - Charles - from Grandad & Uncle - Randy because my mom liked it!

Anna - named after Dad’s mom to honor dad - also after the prophetess Anna - we spoke over her that she was going to be a woman of God!

Randy, Jr. - Sharon’s idea …

When Randy turned 13 - get the whole piece of what we said a “Blankenship man” was to be.”

Part of what we want as a church for you is for you to find out what your identity is -

* Know God
* Find Freedom
* Discover Purpose …
* Make a Difference - … according to what God says about you - how God has designed you!

**Daniel - God is my Judge**

**Belteshazzar - Lady, protect the King**

They gave him a feminine name! They wanted to create gender confusion! “You sissy boy!”

**Hananiah - Yahweh has been gracious**

**Shadrach - I am fearful of God**

**Mishael - Who is what God is?** (God is mighty! God is awesome! God is powerful! There is no one like God!)

**Meshach - I am despised, contemptible and humiliated**

He was moved from confidence to cowardice.

**Azariah - Yahweh has helped**

**Abednego - Servant of Nebo**

“You’re a slave - to a man - you no longer are going to get any help from God - You’re under us now!”

**When culture shifts, we must know who we are.**

Daniel 1:8 - But Daniel was determined not to defile himself by eating the food and wine given to them by the king. He asked the chief of staff for permission not to eat these unacceptable foods.

Notice Daniel asked - he didn’t demand - he didn’t come off like a jerk!

**> Culture will ask us to compromise our standards**

Have you felt that?

Sometimes we face so much pressure to live and do things that are not in line with God’s Word.

We are pressured to change our belief so that we will be comfortable - Or we compare ourselves with others - “I’m not as bad as….”

The plan of God is good for you - not hard - the way of the transgressor is hard!

I see people suffering all the time from decisions and lifestyles they have chosen, that God’s Word has warned us about - and I wonder, “So what’s so bad about the Christian way of life?”

Even if you weren’t a Christian, living as a Christian is the best way of life!

**When culture shifts, we must reaffirm our convictions.**

Daniel 1:9-10 - Now God had given the chief of staff both respect and affection for Daniel. But he responded, “I am afraid of my lord the king, who has ordered that you eat this food and wine. If you become pale and thin compared to the other youths your age, I am afraid the king will have me beheaded.”

Daniel 1:11-14 - Daniel spoke with the attendant who had been appointed by the chief of staff to look after Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. “Please test us for ten days on a diet of vegetables and water,” Daniel said. “At the end of the ten days, see how we look compared to the other young men who are eating the king’s food. Then make your decision in light of what you see.” The attendant agreed to Daniel’s suggestion and tested them for ten days.

Daniel asked to be tested -

Are you willing to be tested? Do you relish the opportunity to be tested by our culture so that you can prove that God’s ways are really better?

Sometimes we’re shouting at people, when it might be better if we just lived right ourselves! We’ve had prominent Christians shouting about the sins of others, then they get caught in terrible sins - how about we just live for God ourselves?

**> Culture creates a confrontation**

When have you faced a conflict between culture and your convictions? How did you handle it?

Cheating on your taxes … culture says no problem - The Bible says we are to honor our leaders and pay our taxes.

Cheating on your spouse - the culture says, no problem - everybody does it - at least once - your marriage will survive - Temptation can be strong sometimes … the Bible says stay faithful -

Have any kind of sex you want with anyone - outside of a relationship in a covenant between one man and one women - culture says do whatever you want - everyone has the right to their own right - The Bible says marriage is a picture of the relationship between Christ and His Church - there is only one picture.

**When culture shifts, we must respond the right way.**

Many believers are responding - but not in the right way.

We can be right - but not helpful. If all we are going to do is shout at people that they are wrong, and we are right, we are not really helping!

Others say, let’s reinterpret the Bible to say that love is the only thing that matters - none of the other words or lifestyle directives from the Bible matter - just love - forget the rest - call anyone a Christian who wants to be called a Christian!

There is a balance - truth and love -

I think Daniel and Jesus both modeled this -

Jesus never compromised - yet he loved prostitutes, adulterers, cheating tax collectors who stole from the people, terrorist revolutionaries, murders, thieves - they wanted to be around Him! It was the religious people He drove away!

The Church as a whole is doing two things wrong - acknowledging as acceptable things the Bible says are unacceptable - AND - speaking with more anger than love toward those who live and promote a different cultural lifestyle than us.

John 1:14 - The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

**Truth is God’s standard -**

John 17:17 - Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth.

The word of God is truth, and living by it will make us holy - that’s being in a right relationship with God!

We love everybody! Everybody is welcome to come to our church - but we believe the Word of God is truth!

But - when we line ourselves up with the Word of God - none of us fully measure up! So we need grace -

**Grace is God’s favor.**

We need God’s favor! He died for us while we were sinners! He loves sinners! He loves us just as we are - and loves us too much to let us stay where we are!

This is why He doesn’t allow anything we do to qualify us for heaven - it’s only by His grace!

Ephesians 2:8-9 - God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

**Without truth, we are corrupt. (this and the next green line can go on the same slide)**

We have to have truth. We can’t compromise on God’s truth -

But - **without grace, we are all condemned! (add this on the next slide leaving the previous line).**

We can’t do enough to get saved!

Some people believe in a 51% Gospel - “He was a good man! His good works outweighs the bad works!”

It requires being 100% correct to stand in the presence of a holy God - but none of us will accomplish that - So Jesus took the punishment for us!

That’s grace!

**Without truth, we become worldly.**

This is where Christians end up being no different than those without a relationship with Christ -

We need God’s truth to help us in our relationships - to be faithful at work - faithful to our wives - good parents to our kids - being loving and encouraging in what we say.

**Without grace, we become judgmental. (add this on the next slide leaving the previous line).**

We see ourselves as being better than others. Then the stench of religious pride comes in - this is when no one wants our Jesus or wants to have anything to do us with.

Remember this: We’ll never have to forgive someone more than Jesus forgave us.

**Truth without grace is mean.**

**Grace without truth is meaningless.**

**Truth and grace is medicine.**

Doesn’t our culture need some good medicine? We’ve got it, if we can keep these two together!

We are all messed up - some just got to the hospital a little sooner than others!

**Grace invites us to be free.**

He knows what you done - but He still welcomes you!

**Truth sets us free. (add this on the next slide leaving the previous line).**

We don’t change the truth, the truth changes us.

John 8:1-11 - Jesus returned to the Mount of Olives, but early the next morning he was back again at the Temple. A crowd soon gathered, and he sat down and taught them. As he was speaking, the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd.

“Teacher,” they said to Jesus, “this woman was caught in the act of adultery. The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?”

They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him, but Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger. They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, “All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!” Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust.

When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, “Where are your accusers? Didn’t even one of them condemn you?”

“No, Lord,” she said.

And Jesus said, “Neither do I. Go and sin no more.”

How did they catch her in the act?

What about the guy?

It’s amazing how we can see everyone else’s sins and be blind to our own.

They were trying to trap Jesus - Often people are trying to trap us.

“What do you think about this court decision … this law … this new school policy … this new policy at work!”

The culture is trying to trap you! Be wise like Jesus! Don’t fall into every trap!

* Don’t answer every question on facebook - don’t get into every argument -

Jesus wrote in the dirt - what did He write? We don’t know - which means we don’t need to know -

But I’ll tell you this - Jesus knew that the people who brought the woman to Him were sinners as well.

They kept demanding an answer - so Jesus gives the famous answer…

They all walked away -

Jesus didn’t humiliate the woman - she had already been humiliated -

Maybe if we want to bring people to Jesus, we shouldn’t be trying to add to the humiliation of their sin. The sinful religions leaders were pointing the finger - not Jesus - too many Christians today are pointing fingers.

Jesus loved without compromise -

**Hold high God’s truth.**

**Freely give God’s grace.**

*Based on Chris Hodge book and series - The Daniel Dilemma*