Series: Standing Firm in Love

Series Text: 1st Corinthians 16:13-14

February 10, 2019

Message 2:

**Changing Stinkin’ Thinkin’!**

Daniel 4

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

**Intro:** We’re looking at how Daniel and his friends stood strong for God in a time when their culture totally changed … taken as slaves … everything changed … yet they still lived without compromise - yet lived within the culture that was very pagan - and were able to influence that culture and people in that culture.

**We will either set the culture or reflect the culture.**

You are either a thermostat or a thermometer.

Jesus told us to let our light shine … so that others will want to glorify God …

We are to be salt … light … make things better and brighter!

We are to have a positive impact on our culture!

Sometimes it is hard to figure this out -

(ILL) - Like the guy who got a new thermos and his friend didn’t know what it was -

* What you got there?
* A thermos!
* What does it do?
* Keeps hot stuff hot and cold stuff cold?
* How does it know?
* It just knows!
* What do you have in there?
* A bowl of hot soup - and two popsicles!

Sometimes this thing of navigating culture and staying true to who we are as followers of Christ can be difficult!

We are not to retreat from our culture - we are to have an impact on it!

John 17:15-16 - I’m not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. They do not belong to this world any more than I do.

We are not to retreat into a “fort mentality.”

Christian churches - stores - schools - “I work in a Christian business!”

How does a school get saved? How does a business get saved?

Those things don’t get saved - people get saved - and if all we do is hang around other Christians - how are we going to have an impact on our world?

But - when we move out into the culture - as some of you have to do on a very regular basis - how do you impact the culture in a positive way - and impact people in a positive way - without becoming part of it yourself?

The single culprit and cause of every ungodliness today: A Babylon Mentality

More than a locality - Babylon is a mentality - There is a way of thinking that influences all of culture in a negative way.

If we expose the ways of Satan, we won’t be as likely to fall into his traps!

From the beginning - the original temptation:

**Satan’s lie:**

**“I’m all about you… God is all about Himself.”**

Satan wants to convince you that he is for you - He wants to convince you he’s got a great life for you with great fun - He will end up destroying you!

He wants to convince you that God is only interested in Himself - That God is not interested in you.

Genesis 11:4 - Then they said, “Come, let’s build a great city for ourselves with a tower that reaches into the sky. This will make us famous and keep us from being scattered all over the world.”

“for ourselves” -

We have been basically selfish since the beginning -

Genesis 11:9 - That is why the city was called Babel, because that is where the Lord confused the people with different languages. In this way he scattered them all over the world.

“Babylon” comes from “Babel” - and it is confused, deranged thinking!

If you follow a way other than God’s way, it will cause confusion in your life. You will experience chaos in your life.

We experience chaos in our nation right now -

* Mass shootings
* Our government is broke -
* Some of our leaders are insane! Nothing they say or do makes any sense - it is the opposite of making sense!

It has been getting worse ever since we started asking God to leave every part of our public culture …

* Can’t pray in school
* Can’t carry a Bible at school
* Can’t wear a t-shirt with a Christian message
* Can’t have a Nativity scene at Christmas time
* Can’t pray with a football team after a game
* Can’t refer to the Bible at a graduation!

Our culture has lost it’s mind - it is the result of confused thinking!

Isaiah 47:8-10 - “Listen to this, you pleasure-loving kingdom,

living at ease and feeling secure.

You say, ‘I am the only one, and there is no other.

I will never be a widow or lose my children.’

Well, both these things will come upon you in a moment:

widowhood and the loss of your children.

Yes, these calamities will come upon you,

despite all your witchcraft and magic.

“You felt secure in your wickedness.

‘No one sees me,’ you said.

But your ‘wisdom’ and ‘knowledge’ have led you astray,

and you said, ‘I am the only one, and there is no other.’

It’s all about me! Wait while I take a selfie!

**Babylon’s motto:**

**(The motto of a confused culture)**

**“I am the only one, and there is no other.”**

People think they are smarter than God - know more than God - have better answers than God - know now to live life better than God -

**Confused thinking elevates self.**

Some have even called our generation the Me Generation.

* **We are Self-adoring**
* **We are Self-building**

We can build our lives apart from God. We don’t need God - we’ll call Him when we need Him!

Prosperity isn’t good for most people! Most people when they are prosperous have no need of God -

It’s when tragedy hits and everything falls apart that they call out to God.

If there were some unfortunate, ungodly, awful tragedy that hit our culture this week, churches would be more full Tuesday night than they are this morning -

That’s what happened on 9/11.

**- We are Self-indulging.**

**- When we lift up ourselves, we lower God.**

The enemy will tell you that God doesn’t love you.

If God doesn’t love you why did He die for you?

The enemy will tell you that God isn’t for you.

If God isn’t for you, why does He offer you free forgiveness for everything you’ve done?

The enemy will tell you that God wants too much from you.

Why does God say He will offer you the best life if you turn away from your sin and receive His forgiveness?

Daniel 4:4 - I, Nebuchadnezzar, was living in my palace in comfort and prosperity.

Tell story ….

Daniel 4:22 - That tree, Your Majesty, is you. For you have grown strong and great; your greatness reaches up to heaven, and your rule to the ends of the earth.

Daniel 4:25-26 - You will be driven from human society, and you will live in the fields with the wild animals. You will eat grass like a cow, and you will be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven periods of time will pass while you live this way, until you learn that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world and gives them to anyone he chooses. But the stump and roots of the tree were left in the ground. This means that you will receive your kingdom back again when you have learned that heaven rules.

Oh look - a leader of a country goes insane - we see that a lot!

Notice God leaves the stump - God always leaves an opportunity for you to come back! God wants to restore you! You may feel like you’ve been cut down to the stump, but God wants to restore you!

But, we have to acknowledge that heaven rules.

What is our mentality - the selfie mentality - or the heaven rules mentality?

Nebuchadnezzar forgot all about this warning … walked out on his rooftop admiring everything he built - gave himself total credit for all.

Daniel 4:34-37 - “After this time had passed, I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked up to heaven. My sanity returned, and I praised and worshiped the Most High and honored the one who lives forever.

His rule is everlasting,

and his kingdom is eternal.

All the people of the earth

are nothing compared to him.

He does as he pleases

among the angels of heaven

and among the people of the earth.

No one can stop him or say to him,

‘What do you mean by doing these things?’

“When my sanity returned to me, so did my honor and glory and kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored as head of my kingdom, with even greater honor than before.

“Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and glorify and honor the King of heaven. All his acts are just and true, and he is able to humble the proud.”

One of the most ungodly leaders in history - acknowledged the greatness of God.

But it took him losing everything to make that acknowledgement - and he disregarded a warning of love all along -

But in spite of that - when he looked to God, God restored Him!

He wants to do this for everybody!

What do you need to do to live strong, survive, and thrive in an ungodly, confused culture?

Three “I Wills” -

1. **I will exalt God.**

Not just on Sunday - not for a moment - but I’m going to live my life open for Jesus.

Not just private - not just in my heart - I’m going to live my life open, out of the closet for Jesus!

Have you noticed the nuts at football games … basketball games … costumes … screaming …

Video or pic of when Tiger won September 23, 2018 … first time in 5 years …

***Video***

Then they think we’re crazy if we get excited at church!

Why do we get excited about people who don’t even know our names, but want to stay quiet for the God who not only knows our name - but died for us!

I haven’t met a millionaire athlete yet that would die for masses of sinful, selfish people.

Psalm 145:1 - I will exalt you, my God and King,

and praise your name forever and ever.

If you exalt God, there is no way you can exalt yourself, and you will survive culture.

**2. I will acknowledge God.**

We need to acknowledge God in every area of our lives.

Do you think you control some aspect of your life? God has given you a choice - you can either control things, and see how that goes - or you can let Him control things -

1st Corinthians 4:7 - For what gives you the right to make such a judgment? What do you have that God hasn’t given you? And if everything you have is from God, why boast as though it were not a gift?

We need to acknowledge that God’s Word is true, no matter what our culture says about it - no matter what laws might be passed about what we can read - what I can teach about.

Recognize that your bank account is God’s …

Recognize that your job is God’s …

Recognize that your school work - career - potential college future - it’s all God’s …

Recognize that your family is God’s … living for God or not … loving you or not … coming over for Sunday dinner or not - recognize that it is all God’s!

Recognize that this nation is God’s … our leaders are God’s … just like Nebuchadnezzar - God can do anything He wants … the court decisions, they belong to the Lord.

He is either extending grace, or allowing His judgment to flow - It all belongs to God - so if you are going to survive this culture without getting pulled down into the insanity of it, you’ve got to recognize that God is in control of it all!

**3. I will humble myself.**

Humility is coming - you can initiate it, or life will initiate it.

You can initiate it, or circumstances will initiate it.

You can initiate it, or God will initiate it.

James 4:10 - Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor.

(ILL) My stupidity when I broke the 8th grade mile record …

I was proud … I got humbled …

**Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it’s thinking of yourself less.**

One great preacher - “The man on his face can never fall from that position.” Roy Stockstill

Stay low, serve God, serve people, make it all about Jesus.

**Standing strong in a pride inflated culture begins face down.**

If we are going to influence our culture, we can’t argue our culture into righteousness through our wise arguments - we must recognize that God is the one in control - He is the only one who can really bring change - and we must surrender to Him - and pray.

This will help us love broken, confused, hurting people well in this confused culture.

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