

Living Into Truth

Daniel 2

The book of Daniel challenges us to live into the truth that we proclaim. While yes he has a bit of a reputation already built with the king when he is able to come before him to save his head – he has that rapport because his previous interactions were honest and truthful. Daniel was not going to be moved and swayed by anyone to change his convictions and truth about the God he worshipped. He wasn't going to defile himself or prostrate himself or do anything else the Babylonians were doing that was against his religion – and he definitely wasn't going to speak or say any words that didn't proclaim God and his rule over time, space, and people. And while this sermon isn't on the whole book of Daniel – the whole book of Daniel proclaims *that* exact truth. That regardless of the situation Daniel was in he wasn't going to back down from his beliefs – even when it looked tough or death stood before him. He didn't care about the ears hearing the words of Truth. He didn't care about how they would react or the punishment this Babylonian king could EASILY wage against him and his friends. He was going to hold to his convictions and faith...even at the cost of death. And this...is where WE too should find conviction.

We too should hold strong and firm in our faith and living into it each and every day. Speaking truth about what you believe regardless of the consequences. It's about proclaiming the truth in who God is and being unwilling to sacrifice morals or actions or comprise yourself when you know it's not what God seeks and asks of you. Daniel could have easily bowed to the king and worshipped the idols he built and ate the food that was given to him – but all were strictly against what he believed...and he wasn't about to let someone tell him what he should and shouldn't do when it comes to his faith and living it out.

Each and every day we are faced with biblical truths that speak differently than what the world wants us to do and say – and you and I have a choice. And I think often times we weigh our response with the possible outcomes. How is this going to be received? Are they going to be offended? Will there be a backlash to my words? Will there be repercussions? We *worry* about the Truth that we hold to and if we should actually speak it in that moment. And that's a big "T" not a little "t". I'm talking about the Truth of God vs all other truths.

But what's really odd is that we almost forget that Truth when it comes down to issues and topics that may seem harsh to the hearer or are considered hot-button topics like abortion, human life, refugees, the poor and needy, the weak, the hungry... universal love of people. It's almost like we proclaim God's sovereignty over all things and yet in the moment...we may not actually speak it.

How does that even work? If God is sovereign as we proclaim, isn't his sovereignty over this moment, this topic, this action, this issue, this person's life and decisions? But again – the fear of

the person receiving the words starts to take precedence over our speaking to them of God's Truth. If we proclaim that God is the creator of the universe, that God never sat back and watched his creation fall, that God sent prophets and guides to lead his people back to goodness, that God sent his one and only son to die for this relationship and this is Truth... then shouldn't we live into that reality in all situations and all topics – EVEN with the ones that are the most controversial? How well would the prophets have prophesied or the disciples disciplined and brought the word of God to people if they only did it when it was convenient? We know what happens to Jonah when he didn't want to live into the biblical truth and work of God to the people of Nineveh! We know that the disciples were beaten, run out, and killed for what they spoke into. And Christ even warned them that this was the path they would be on if they chose to follow him! This is the path you and I are on. And it's hard – really hard. I constantly am checking myself as to the words I am going to use with the ears that will hear them. And I've found myself holding back on the Gospel because I feared I would make some people uncomfortable and even offend. There have been times when I was worried about praying out loud at restaurants and wanting to be really quiet during the prayer not to disturb the patrons around me. For what? What's the worst that could happen – they hear a prayer of thankfulness! WONDERFUL!

This past year I had the honor and privilege of doing the funeral for the Ames Fire Fighter who died on duty. And I struggled with how much gospel truth to put in that message. And my original transcript for the service had some biblical truth...but I felt it wasn't enough – there simply wasn't enough God. And the night before I was lying in bed really struggling because I wanted to honor God but I knew this wasn't a church funeral so I wanted to honor others too and their beliefs. And ultimately, the day of the funeral I went back and added more God. I was so convicted that I couldn't sleep. I realized that it would be much better and easier for me to beg for *their* forgiveness if they were offended by the Truth I shared than it would be to simply offend my Lord and Savior. I would much rather deal with people on *that* issue – than have to explain myself to God. And during the service...all I saw was nodding smiling tearful people as they heard the gospel truth of Jesus Christ and God's sovereignty over all of creation and after the service all I heard was "thank you" from the family and friends. It is so much easier to simply speak Truth than to push it aside for fear of what it MAY bring to someone else. But we have fear. That speaking in love and truth means that we cannot have a conversation – we cannot continue the relationship with the person receiving Truth. **(Gal 4:16)**

A couple number of months ago Tyler came up here and shared with us of his friend that he's been able to walk with and mentor. A man that came to ISU a Muslim but has since converted to Christianity. And at what cost? His wife and family, his in-laws they all disowned him. That's a massive cost. Way more than speaking the truth and having someone offended – this is downright outcast and ostracism from your loved ones! And here I am worried that someone may have their feelings hurt. Here we are holding back and remaining silent because we fear that

there might be a verbal confrontation!? What's the worst thing that could happen to you or me when we stand and speak for the Truth of God, for the truth of Christ? We have it easy! Imagine if we lived in North Korea or a Muslim majority country where we couldn't speak those Truths. We have the ability to speak God's truth to people without harm. And even if we did...even if we were harmed...even if we were killed – would that be so bad? I'm not ready to die – but dying and then going to see my Father in heaven...I'm *more* than OK with that.

When Christ stands before Pontius Pilate (**John 18:37-38**) he asks him if he is the king – and Jesus' response was that “*You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into this world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.*” And Pilate's response was, “*What is truth?*” TRUTH was standing right in front of him! Truth was what Christ declared in the opening of his words that the reason he was born was to testify to the truth. To testify that Christ, because of his Father, sent him to redeem and justify the world to God. To testify that he is the only way, truth, and life – that the ONLY way to the father is through him (**John 14:6**)! That his Father is active working God. What more truth do we need? What more truth do we need to proclaim? Are we really that afraid of speaking Truth to the grace, hope, love, and redemptive work of God?

Peter writes in **1 Peter 4:11** that if anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. I'm pretty sure God speaks truth – our words, no matter what the situation, needs to be *that* of speaking biblical truth. Paul writes to the church in Colossae (**Col 4:5**) that they are to be wise in the way they act towards outsiders – make the most of every opportunity. Which means we are to speak truth in all situations – every opportunity for wisdom comes from God. Truth comes from God. **Ephesians 4:26**, “Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and **speak truthfully** to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.” **John 17:17**, “Sanctify them by the TRUTH, your word is the truth.”

So what “truth” does Daniel preach? Daniel's truth was that God, *his* God, was not only the only living God but he was the God and creator of all things. That it was his God that put Nebuchadnezzar in the position that he was in. That he is the God who saves – time and time again and will continue to do so. Saving them from pharaoh, floods, desert dwelling, invaders – everything...and it is the very God of Israel who is the cosmic upholder of the entire universe and beyond. The ruler of all things under and above and around the sun...and he doesn't sit idly by. We're not “deist” believers that proclaim while a living God created and started the whole world and then after that he just sat back and watched in his lazy chair. We do NOT believe that God simply wound the clock of the universe and now allows it to run on its own accord. We profess a God who interacts, who works, who allows, who brings things to...and ultimately - who restores. God is allowing kings to come and go, kings from Babylon and Persia to be in control for HIS reasons. HE put them there, HE allowed them to be. And he allowed it...for a temporary time. These kings, these rulers, both of Judah and Israel as well as other kingdoms and

nations – were all temporary for God, the creator of the universe, the holder of all things in the palms of his hands...He was setting things in motion for THE King of kings. THE Lord of lords was to come.

These are the beautiful truths and convicting words of this text. That regardless of where you are, regardless of the people you find yourself with – we are called to speak truth into their lives. That the God of the universe, the God who created you and me and all people of this world in all nations that this world covers – that he loves them, cares for them, and has died for them. And he wants a relationship with them – and it's up to you and I not to kowtow or bend or withhold because of fear or retribution. How else are people to know the truth if we don't speak the truth? How are people supposed to know the grace and truth of Jesus Christ and his work and love and redemption and sacrifice if we don't speak of it, sharing it, living it, breathing it? These are very instructions Christ gave us! To go and make disciples...to actually speak and challenge and love and share the Gospel.

And ultimately, if we proclaim that God is sovereign over all creation, and that we are theists who proclaim that God is moving still to this day as all things are his and working to his good, as Daniel proclaims and as we say too and as **Matthew 28:8** and **Col 1:16** proclaim...then wouldn't it be fair and logical to say that in that moment when we are confronted with people who believe and act differently...that maybe, just maybe...God put this moment here for Truth to be lived and breathed and shared?

You, me...we need to live into truth. Breathe truth. Give truth in all situations. And we aren't to change our Biblical convictions. Simply be who God created you to be, who Christ challenges us to be, and who the Holy Spirit empowered us to become. And honestly living into those things, the knowledge of real Truth.... it's really the only real and honest thing in this world anyways.

Let's pray.