

Outline

The World Huffs and It Puffs John Prokop - Guest Speaker

I have bad news for you! The Big Bad Wolf is real! It is not just a kid's story. Take a hard look at this world and you see his work all around us. He is hungry and he seeks to devour all he can. He is never ever too full to eat. Fathers, mothers, men, women, girls and boys, he isn't picky. They all suit his taste just fine.

Will you pray with me?

What a great five weeks it was that we just finished! Briefly, let 's recap what we learned as Pastor Don has taken us through the adventures in Babylon. We have been learning about being good, and a group of real stiffs, real party poopers, named Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These fella's have been through a lot.

-Kidnapped from their homes they were taken to be indoctrinated into the thinking and worldview of the Babylonian lifestyle, pressured to bow to the altar of a false god.

-Daniel is faced with interpreting a dream of King Nebuchadnezzar, and if you remember it was a forgotten dream so the good king couldn't even tell them what it was.

-Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were feeling the heat, really really feeling the heat. In fact, since they refuse to worship yet another creation of the Babylonian world they are thrown into a giant blazing furnace.

-Next we see Daniel asked to interpret writings on the wall

-Lastly, a decree against prayer is handed down with the sole purpose of trapping Daniel

So what example do we get from these men of God?

-Daniel resolved not to defile himself, he held rigid to his beliefs, and prospered.

-What is Daniel's response to an impossible request? Prayer and truth.

-Threatened with death by fire, we see more resolve (Too bad there weren't Hot Dogs and Marshmallows in those days because I can just see them in there, as the King calls them to come out saying, "no, it's OK were good.")

-Next, another dose of honesty

-And, last week we see Daniel on his knees, praying with confidence in the face of an unjust decree!

Time and again as Daniel is confronted with one challenge or another he lives according to principle, and truth. But, definitely not by the principles and beliefs of the place he found himself. You see **it will never be a principle that is of this world that binds the mouth of the lion who seeks to devour you or your life.** All that is good in this world comes from God. And this foundation of Truth is behind the ability of Daniel and his crew to stand strong in the face of adversity.

Paul Stephens did such a great job a moment ago talking about what the bible says about a foundation. Two weeks from today we will begin the Foundations series and I really believe that these 10 weeks offer something for each of us. So much of what has been discussed in the Clutter Clatter and Daniel series' has centered on being above the fray, being a person of principle. And in each example I think it has been shown how vital it is to be grounded in the word of God, to build and maintain an indestructible foundation.

I recently read the results of a survey that illustrated how sorely this "Foundation" is lacking in many who profess to be born again. Just a few of the more concerning findings from this survey were: among those who claim to be born again Christians nearly half of those interviewed do not believe in the existence of Satan and one-third believe Jesus sinned while on earth. Among those claiming to be Christians, 80 percent cited one non-Christian faith as a route to salvation; 61 percent named two or more. These are lies. And these lies must be a call to action for all of us.

We choose to respond with prayer and a renewed dedication to the word of God and hope each of you

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will be a part of this response. And so over the next weeks in Foundations we will look into the truth in topics like: **who are you really, knowing God and His instruction, creation and order, God's nature, faith, the bible, salvation and repentance, grace, knowing and doing God's will, worship & prayer, and trials & temptations.** Then, we will put all of these things together in the last four weeks building to **Thriving in life...the fullness of a life in Christ.**

How well is your life built to withstand? What will your House do when evil Huffs and Puffs?

In the beginning was the **Word**, and the **Word** was with God, and the **Word** was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. **John 1:1-5 NIV**

In this passage the word "Word" from the Greek is [*logos* /**log-os**]. It was first used around 600 B.C. **Word [*logos* /**log-os**]:**

Denotes the essential Word of God, Jesus Christ, the personal wisdom and power in union with God, his minister in creation and government of the universe, the cause of all the world's life both physical and ethical.

In the beginning was the Word and this light is the cause of all the world's life both physical and ethical. The Way, the Truth, and the Life.

So, how did the world take this light shining forth? I am afraid they, much like you and me, at times, both embraced and turned away. You see 1976 years ago on a Sunday, in fact this very Sunday the week before Easter, Palm Sunday, marks the day of the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem with huge crowds waving palm branches and proclaiming him as the messianic king.

But oh how quickly we can turn...in the blink of an eye. Turning now to John 18:37-38 let's see what transpired five days later. The Lord is now in front of Pontus Pilate.

"You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

"What is truth?" Pilate asked. John 18:37-38 NIV

What is Truth? What is Truth? Good question. **Do you know truth when you hear it? How do you define truth? Truth is quite simply - The way things are...the way they really are!** But, what Pilate was asking was not "please tell me the way things really are!" Far from it! Pilate's rhetorical question was summing up our world. He was stating a fact that is borne of idolatry and pervades this world so very deeply. Pilate was saying "the Mob Rules!" "Peer pressure rules the day and Truth gets in the way!" A few weeks ago I was at a gas station where they had *televisions* in the gas pumps. Have you ever seen these? Here I am pulling in to get some gas, I was thinking about Ni River and the Foundations course and Pow! I am being sold, manipulated. In front of me as I pump my gas I am force fed a commercial for something I don't need and an ad for some hyper-sexual TV show. I did not ask to see it. I didn't tune it in! I realized more fully in that moment than ever before just how much we are bombarded with voices...endless, pushy, sneaky, and constant, voices! Oh what an assault is underway for our attention. And the really scary thing is that these thousands, these millions of voices, are determined to change us. Make no mistake about it, they seek to shape, mold, change each and everyone one of us. And many mean you harm. They want to make us want...something, and more of it. They tell us over and over and over...you got to have that. Gotta look different! Gotta give in! Gotta upgrade...Gotta upgrade your drink, your car, your house, your toys, your spouse, your...private parts. Contentment is never, ever, ever, an option! This is a race that cannot be won! So, how do you keep from running it?

**I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry.
He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire;
he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.
He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God.**

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Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD. Psalm 40:1-3 NIV

Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer.
From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint;
lead me to the rock that is higher than I.
For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe. Psalm 61:1-3 NIV

Can't you just feel the desperation in these Psalms of David? Don't you get a sense of the grind, even in 1000 BC? In a day before television, movies, billboards, radio, magazines, and on and on, David so clearly felt the strain of temptation, the pull of Sin. I ask you...Who alone, who apart from God, can find true contentment in this world? Is it possible? It is always ironic to me to hear the testaments of those that, as we look in from the outside views of this world, have "everything." It is so often sad and so difficult to see what a mess gets made of their lives. Everything can equal nothing!

But oh...how to silence those millions of voices? How does one focus through the noise....resist? How can we break through? We have to do something...radical!

There was a time, it seems like yesterday but it was a little more than 23 years ago, when I found myself in a real rut. Wrong people...wrong places...and wrong things. I remember so clearly waking up one day and I looked at myself, I LOOKED HARD! I was a Christian, I was saved when I was about 13 but I had looked away. I hid, I tried to hide, because light penetrates darkness. It shines through and it reveals...everything. I knew I had to change. I had had this revelation before. I had tried. This time I needed to do more. So, a week later I went to boot camp. I truly believe I was led and I fled.

And I have to tell you...boot camp is a wakeup call. Boy oh boy! In those days a man could really learn how to properly cuss. I no longer had to worry about finding ways to look down on myself...they were provided hourly. Minute by minute those screaming, spitting, maniacs stripped us down. As the days passed, and they passed SSSLLLLLOOOOOOOW we were...changing. The tearing down was the first necessary step to building up, to remaking. And, for me it worked. I had a new start, new habits and twenty years later I retired from the Navy.

I think God loves Boot Camp...well, not the cussing part I'm sure. But, I know He loves the process of renewal; the re-birth of a spirit. In the beginning of time God knew we could not go it alone. He sent His Son to be our Drill Sergeant. To tell a truth that was sorely missing, a truth that brought with it the only true hope for us. Our Lord said that "there is no greater love than that a man lay down his life for another." And, He dove on the grenade; He gave His life, His blood the price paid...for you, for me! John 10:10 says: **The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. NIV (and that they might have it more abundantly. KJV)**

Those millions of voices they want something from you and me. The thief of this world hungers to steal from you, it steals families, it steals life. And, I think the way it does it most is by keeping our attention...and, all the while it kills the spirit, it destroys hope. You just have to look around, you know, you can see. There is no contentment in it. It is a hamster wheel! So let's stop running, let's jump off.

There is an unmistakable question before each of us. What are you waiting for? **What holds us back from giving our whole Heart, Soul, Strength, Mind (Luke 10:27)?** I believe that sometimes we put so many flowers on the sill that the bars fade, and we can no longer tell that we are looking out of a prison window. We begin to be more and more reassured by the comfort that comes with walking in the middle of the pack, it is so often the path of least resistance. But, there's still that one little problem...That inescapable longing that calls you for something more. And that is why each of us is here today. But going to church by itself can and will only bring you so far.

I heard a story about an airplane flight that Billy Graham was on as he was traveling around the country giving his crusades. There was a man on the flight just a few rows behind the great evangelist who was very intoxicated and belligerent. Numerous times the flight attendants tried to quiet him down with little success. Finally, one of the passengers sitting next to him couldn't take it anymore and said. Hey...watch your language don't you realize that that is Billy Graham sitting right up there? The man

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quieted down and as Billy Graham looked back at him he held out his hand to him. And Billy, being very gracious, got up and shook his hand. And then, the man looked up and said, Mister Graham it is such an honor to meet you. You would not believe how much your preaching has helped me!

I have come to know more and more fully that everything that is good in me comes from God. I have to live in this world, but I no longer want the world to live in me! And that is a beautiful struggle, one that cannot be shouldered without a strong Foundation.

Today can be the day. Today can be the day you give your life over to the Lord. Today can be the day that each of us resolves to go all in...To begin the effort, embark on this beautiful struggle to be truly free of the things of this world that weigh us down. To take a drink and begin quenching a thirst that is deeper than we ever realized. What are you holding onto that prevents you from having "life and having it more abundantly"? Is this the time, for your life, that you do something radical?

I hope you will consider joining in with us in our Foundations course. Be you a seeker of Truth, a new believer, or someone who could use a jump start, I believe that all in this living body we call Ni River will benefit.

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