

# Witness

Sharing the Gospel of Jesus

June 16, 2019

## **DAY 1: In the Lions Den**

*“Daniel said to the king, ‘O king, live forever! My God sent his angel and shut the lions’ mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm’” (vv. 21–22).*

- Daniel 6

Daniel 6 brings us to the Persian period of the Old Testament. At the beginning of the seventh century BC, the prophet Isaiah foresaw that the southern kingdom of Judah would be exiled into Babylon but that a ruler named Cyrus would later conquer Babylon and send Judah back to their land (Isa. 39; 45:1–13). In 539/538 BC, this prophecy was fulfilled when Cyrus the Great conquered the Babylonian Empire. Cyrus’ general Gobryas captured the city of Babylon and got rid of co-regents Belshazzar and Nabonidus, killing one and exiling the other (Dan. 5:30). Babylon became a part of the Medo- Persian Empire, and Cyrus installed Darius the Mede to govern Babylon and its territory (v. 31).

Unlike the Babylonians, who took people from their homeland, the Persians relocated displaced peoples in their empire back to their own countries (2 Chron. 36:22–23). Many Jews returned to the Promised Land, but many also remained in Babylon, including Daniel, who was in his late seventies or early eighties at the time of the return in 539/538 BC. He remained a key part of Babylonian society and was the chief advisor to Darius (Dan. 6:1–3). The governor’s other advisors were jealous of Daniel, but because of the prophet’s outstanding reputation, the only way to get rid of him was to outlaw Daniel’s piety (v. 4–5). They told Darius that the advisors unanimously agreed that a new law should be put in place whereby the governor alone would represent the divine for thirty days. During that time, only prayers offered to Darius would be legal. Darius was fooled by these liars.

If we are not careful, we might misunderstand what the prophet did next. When Daniel prayed to the one true God, he was not instigating confrontation but rather going about his normal routine (v. 10). He had prayed before the ban, and he would continue to pray after it. Daniel models how we should respond if we ever face the threat of the state. We should not be unnecessarily antagonistic, though we must obey the Lord regardless of whether the governing authorities permit it. Like Daniel, we should not go out of our way to fight with the ruling authorities, but neither should we bow to ungodly demands. Moreover, when we are faithful to the Lord, He will be faithful to us. He may not rescue us from the lions’ den like He did Daniel, but He will save us forever, granting us eternal life.

John Calvin comments on today’s passage that truly following God is both internal and external. It is “not only the duty of offering to God the sacrifice of prayer in our hearts, but that our open profession is also required, and thus the reality of our worship of God may clearly appear.” Daniel was recognized for his love of God, so when his piety was outlawed, he was easy to find. Though we should not be rebellious, the world should know by our actions that we love the one true God.

1. Thoughts?

## **DAY 2: Imitators of Christ**

*“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children”*

*- Ephesians 5:1*

The opening chapter of the Bible tells us that humanity is made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). While theologians have debated the implications of this teaching, all agree that to be in the image of God is to reflect His glory and holy character.

### 1. What are examples of Gods character?

However, the intrusion of sin into God’s good creation has marred His image in all human beings. Though human beings retain dignity after the Fall, the presence of sin guarantees that we cannot fulfill the call to mirror the character of God completely. We may still finitely display some of His characteristics (such as reason and love) but we cannot live after the pattern of His righteousness.

We cannot do this until after we have been redeemed by Christ. When we profess faith and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit we are progressively enabled to fulfill the call to mirror God’s holiness and glory. We begin to live righteously if we have truly been saved.

Although we receive the ability to do this, the presence of sin on earth means that we need a pattern to follow if our lives are going to be conformed to the character of God. God Himself, as Jesus, is our pattern. We must look to Him and His commands to understand the righteous way in which we must live. The righteous acts and traits that we must display will not justify us, but they do demonstrate that we have been truly set apart as God’s holy children, and they are necessary if we are to reflect His image.

### 2. Where is an area that you need work in reflecting Gods character?

*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. - Philippians 4:8*

God has given us the spiritual disciplines so that we might fulfill the call to imitate His holiness and righteousness. Therefore we must endeavor to study His Word, pray, fellowship, and evangelize, always remembering that if we do such things without having our character conformed to Christ, then we have not done them rightly.

### 3. Thoughts?

### **DAY 3: Faithfulness**

*“The righteous shall live by faith”*

- Romans 1:16–17

Our previous series on Joy reminds us that, no matter how bleak things may get, we must still hold on to the promises of God.

We can trust God because He alone is trustworthy. He alone sent His only Son to the cross as a sacrifice for our sins. We can have faith in Him because He did not hold back from doing the work necessary to save us and to count us righteous in His sight.

Today we will look at Romans 1:16–17. These verses serve as the theme statement for the entire book of Romans, the most comprehensive treatment of salvation we find written by the apostle Paul. For our purposes, we shall look especially at the second half of verse 17 where we find that “the righteous shall live by faith.”

*16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. 17 For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”* Romans 1: 16,17

Theologians have rightly interpreted this verse as a reference to the unmistakable righteousness of Christ that is the sole ground of our justification. We would be mistaken, however, to assume that this is all that the verse is teaching us. The Bible tells us again and again that though the righteousness of Christ is the only basis by which God declares us righteous, we are still called to live faithful lives (James 2:26). These righteous lives will always be imperfect before we die, and the works such a life produces in no way contribute to our justification. But, if we are living a life that does not reflect loyalty to God at all, we do not have true faith, and if we do not have true faith, neither have we been declared righteous by the Lord.

One of the essential elements of saving faith is called *fiducia*, or personal trust. So, to say “the righteous live by faith” is to say that the righteous live their lives in loyalty to God, inspired by a personal trust in His promises. Righteous people live a life that is characterized in a long standing trust in the goodness of God despite their situation.

The fruits of such *fiducia* in our interaction with other people is seen in a life of integrity. Righteous people can be trusted by others. When something is told to a righteous person in confidence, it remains in confidence. Righteous people keep godly promises no matter what. Righteous people are loyal to God and to their friends.

We often do not feel like righteous people, even so, we are declared righteous on account of our faith in Christ. As such, we must live a life that reflects this reality. Endeavor to behave in a trustworthy and loyal manner in all of your relationships.

1. Is there an area in your life where you have been “unfaithful?”

## **DAY 4: Sharing Christ**

*“Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ”*

- Colossians 1:28-29

Addressing a congregation that struggled with false teachers who promoted elitism, the apostle Paul has been unafraid in Colossians 1 to stress that The Gospel is for everyone. Instead of a message that bears fruit only among the most educated or most spiritual, the true gospel finds believers everywhere (v. 5–6). It will achieve a cosmic restoration, for nothing can go untouched by the Savior’s work (v. 19–20). In addition, if these statements of the universality of the gospel and the sufficiency of the Savior are not enough, Paul tells us in verse 28 that his ministry is to proclaim Christ, “warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom.” Jesus is not to be proclaimed to a mere few — He must be preached to everyone.

1. Who in your life needs to hear the message of Jesus?

Warning and teaching are the two sides to the apostle’s work. The warning aspect of Christian proclamation entails admonishing professing believers who are tempted to stray from the faith. Following that model, we exhort others, whether or not we are ordained pastors, to hold fast to the biblical Jesus in all circumstances (Acts 20:29–31; 1 Cor. 4:14; Heb. 6:1–12). Teaching helps the Body of Christ (1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 John 9). All believers have a share in the teaching ministry. Some may be ordained to the teaching office, but all believers, in whom Christ’s Word dwells richly, teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, at least informally (Col. 3:16). Likewise, we must readily hear instruction in the Word at all times and throughout our entire lives. John Calvin writes, “No one is so eminent in respect of wisdom as to be entitled to exempt himself from tuition [instruction].”

2. Who are you allowing to speak into your life?

Paul works (And every Christian should) to present “everyone mature in Christ” equipped and ready to fulfill the specific work that the Father has given to each of us (Col. 1:28). This can be a toil and a struggle (v. 29), as any full-time pastor would readily confess. But the work of Christian instruction is hard for everyone, even if our children are our only students, it can be discouraging to instruct them again and again when it seems that they are just not understanding Jesus and who they are to be in Him. Thankfully, like Paul, we have been empowered by the Spirit and will receive the strength necessary to endure in teaching His truth as we rely on Him (v. 29; see also Phil. 4:13).

3. Who’s life should you be speaking into?

God calls all of us to take part in the teaching ministry of the church, though not all of us have the same role. Some will be ordained teachers. Others will help their children memorize Scripture. It’s all important.

## DAY 5: Witness

Luke 24:48

<sup>48</sup> *You are witnesses of these things.*

The more we are involved in ministry, the more we want to deepen our understanding of the Word of God. The more we deepen our understanding of the Word of God, the more we want to put that understanding to work in ministry.

Acts 1:8

<sup>8</sup> *But you will receive <sup>n</sup>power <sup>o</sup>when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and <sup>p</sup>you will be <sup>q</sup>my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and <sup>r</sup>Samaria, and <sup>s</sup>to the end of the earth."*

One of the interesting things about contemporary Christian jargon is the inexact use of the word *witness*. Too often people use the terms *evangelism* and *witnessing* interchangeably, as if they were synonyms. They are not.

All evangelism is witness, but not all witness is evangelism. Evangelism is a specific type of witnessing. Not everyone is called to be a pastor or teacher. Not everyone is called to a specialized ministry. Not everyone is called to be an evangelist (though we are all called to share our faith). We are all called to be witnesses to Christ, to make His invisible kingdom visible. We witness by doing the ministry of Christ. We witness by being the church, the people of God.

1 Corinthians 3:6

<sup>6</sup> *I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.*

Some of us can plant. Some of us can water. When we plant and water, God will bring an increase.

1. How are you actively a witness to Christ?
2. Are there three people you could pray about sharing The Gospel of Christ with?