Thrive
Daniel 2 // Kip Nanninga
April 15, 2018

Kip // Good morning. It’s great to see everybody. Well, hey, I thought I was in great shape. A good friend of mine up in Wisconsin asked me to be part of a triathlon. I thought, hey, I got out of a great basketball season, so I feel like I’m in good shape. This is kind of how I felt in my heart about the triathlon. This is what I was going to achieve. I could look like those guys, right? And so, my only response being up at a residency program in Wisconsin was, yeah, sure, you betcha. I will help you out, right? And so, I made two critical errors, though, before this triathlon. The first was, because I wanted to look the part, I went out and bought a brand-new pair of tennis shoes. Yeah, huge mistake. You guys that race you are thinking, he’s a rookie, what a moron, right? The second thing I did, because this was a residency program and I lived in Omaha, and I was only up there for the summer, I didn’t have my bike.

My friend good friend is like, hey, we’ll get you a ten-speed, and we’ll just raise the seat, no problem. I start into this triathlon, and it’s not bad. I’m feeling in good shape, and the first part of it, was we were running. I’m up with the pack. We are running well. We get on the bike, and it’s crazy because it’s got the old school ten-speed with the ram-horn handle bars, and I’m on that thing pedaling like crazy, and still feeling really good, and then we get in the canoe and go across Lake Wissota, and somewhere like -- that felt like eternity, right? We get out in the middle of that lake, and the guy puts me in front -- my good friend puts me in front because it has more legroom, and I’m just pulling like crazy, and we finally get to the shore. I’m sure by now we are like at the back of the pack. We get to that shore, and we are supposed to make this long hill climb, like run up this hill, and I hit the wall. You guys that race, you guys that bike -- you are my heroes, right? Because you can push through that wall. I hit that wall, my legs went gel. My upper body was screaming out stop, what are you thinking? You are not in shape for this kind of race. I hit the wall hard.

You know, when I was preparing the message for Daniel 2, I think most of us in this room have the same type of experience in life. Like we are going through life, and things are really good. We have the great house in the great part of Colorado, and we have a beautiful family, and our kids are doing the right things, and I have the right job, and it seems like everything is going, really, really well in this race we call life, and then guess what? We hit the wall, and the bottom drops out, and things get dark, and the things that are supposed to happen do not happen, and in our minds, in this kind of equation of life we think God, I have been doing all the right things. I have been attending church. I have been having devotions. I have been reading your word. I have been trusting you, so we ask the question like, God, why does stuff like this happen? C.S. Lewis who is one of my favorite writers. I enjoy reading a lot of C.S. Lewis.

He says this that three and a half years into his marriage he lost his wife to cancer. He waited until he was later to get married, and he was left with two little boys. He writes this in his journal, in “a grief observed,” he says this that I crawled. I scraped. I clawed my way to the gates of heaven only to hear the dead bolt lock. God was silent, and it does not matter how long you have walked with The Lord, there are moments in our life where we feel like God does not make sense, that He is silent, that we get the call, we get the papers, we get the knock at the door and life crashes, and we hit the wall, and when we hit the wall we can remember this, we can thrive by understanding that the God of heaven can do all things, and the God of heaven knows all things, and we trust the sovereignty of God even though it feels like we are experiencing dark days.

Let me pray for us. Father, I thank you for Your Word today. Jesus, it is for Your name and fame that we remember that You are good, that You are faithful, and that You will do it again, and again and again. You will remind us that You are sovereign, and when it feels like You have left the throne, and You are pacing the floor God, You have not left, and remind us of that today in Daniel chapter 2, amen. So, take your Bibles and turn to Daniel chapter 2. We are in this series called “Thrive” and it feels like there are times in life when we kind of get through, and we are only surviving, and Craig did a powerful job last week of reminding us that God is bigger than our Babylon. God is bigger than any circumstances that we are facing, and when it feels like we have hit this empire called Babylon in our life, Craig reminded us that God is bigger, and did a great job of kicking this series off. In Daniel 2 if you weren’t here last week, let me kind of give you a disclaimer. Let me kind of go backwards a little bit to the Daniel 2. In Daniel chapter 2, amen. So, take your Bibles and turn to Daniel chapter 2. We are in this series called “Thrive” and it feels like there are times in life when we kind of get through, and we are only surviving, and Craig did a powerful job last week of reminding us that God is bigger than our Babylon. God is bigger than any circumstances that we are facing, and when it feels like we have hit this empire called Babylon in our life, Craig reminded us that God is bigger, and did a great job of kicking this series off. In Daniel 2 if you weren’t here last week, let me kind of give you a disclaimer. Let me kind of go backwards a little bit to the Daniel 2.

He was an evil king who captured the nation of Israel and destroyed the capitol city of Jerusalem. Here’s the thing King Nebuchadnezzar didn’t just destroy the capitol city of Jerusalem. He deployed three kind of waves of bringing people from Israel, from Jerusalem to Babylon. Not only did he create insult to injury and pour gas on the fire of the Israelites, he said not only did I destroy your past, but I’m going to destroy your present, and they went in and destroyed the Temple the core of what Israel believed, the core of Yahweh their God at that time. Nebuchadnezzar said what you worship and what you have held on to, I’m going to completely destroy, and I’m going to destroy it in front of you, so he came in and he destroyed the Temple. And before he destroyed the Temple, he took some of the sacred things from the Temple and he took them to Babylon. 

Nebuchadnezzar said, "And so I tore down your sanctuary and set your sanctuary on fire. As a result, I am going to hand you over to the Babylonians for 70 years to fulfill the misdeeds of your ancestors, the way you have provoked Me."

Daniel 2:26-27

And so you are thinking, he's a rookie, what a moron, right? The second thing I did, because this was a residency program and I lived in Omaha, and I was only up there for the summer, I didn’t have my bike.
back to Babylon and put them in his temple where they would now worship the god of Marduk and the god of Baal. He took the sacred things that reminded them of God and faithfulness, and he took those sacred things and put them back in his area of worship and said, see, your God did not save you. See these things? They do not matter now. Your God will not show up. Your God does not care. My gods will save the day. Babylon, the empire, the greatest nation on earth will be what you worship now, and so he not only destroyed their past and present, but then Nebuchadnezzar took the best of the best, the finest athletes, the most intelligent, the most good-looking men of Jerusalem, and he said, they will become mine.

Whatever took place in your future, I’m going to destroy your future because I’m taking your best and brightest, and I’ll indoctrinate them and they’ll worship my gods, and they will bow to my gods, and see Jerusalem? See, oh Israel? Your God is done, and if there is one verse that I could say would be a great theme verse for this series, this series of “Thrive,” it would be Proverbs 21:1. You need to circle this one in your Bible. This is one of those kinds of things we can stake our lives on. Here’s what it says in Proverbs 21:1, that the king’s heart is like channels of water in the hands of the Lord. He turns it wherever he wishes, and you are going to see in Daniel 2, how this great King Nebuchadnezzar, over this greatest empire of Babylon, God says, guess what, King Nebuchadnezzar, you believe you are in control, but your heart is like channels of water in my hand, and I, God says, will turn it to whoever I wish.

So in Daniel 2:1 it says this, in the second year of his reign Nebuchadnezzar had dreams. His mind was troubled. He could not sleep. Have you ever been there? You have had one of those dreams, one of those moments, a lot of anxiety in your life, maybe a new job, maybe a new school, maybe you are dating somebody new? You have all of this anxiety in the middle of the night, and you wake up, and your mind starts to run, and you are pacing the floor. That’s what’s going on in King Nebuchadnezzar’s life right now, but it’s not a dream. It’s a nightmare. He wakes up in the middle of the night, and so in verse 2 he calls all of the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers the astrologers to tell him what he dreamed. And when they came in and stood before the king he said to them, I have had a dream that troubles me, and I want to know what it means. In other words, this is your job. This is why you are part of my administration, my cabinet. Your only jobs are to tell me the things I don’t know by studying the stars, by studying sorcery, by studying the things that are mysteries, and I want you to tell me what is going on. In verse 4 the astrologers answered to the king, may the king live forever. That’s a great response there, right?

So, if you ever come before your boss, tell him good things, right? And they say may the king live forever. Tell your servants the dream, and we’ll interpret it, no problem. And the king said to the astrologers, this is what I have firmly decided. You see the king summons everyone to bring in everyone who is wise, who studies the stars, who looks into the crystal balls, who lays out the tarot cards, who looks at our palms. He says sorcerers, astrologers, wise men, magicians and chanters, anyone who considers themselves wise, I can’t find peace, and I want to find peace because this dream has something to do with my leadership, so there was panic, awe, and wonder in this dream for Nebuchadnezzar, and he says, tell me. Tell me what’s going on. This is troubling to me. So he calls all of them in and he says listen to this, the nightmare that has brought fear and wonder, this is what I have firmly decided, this is the nonnegotiable -- that if you don’t tell me, guess what’s going to happen? If you don’t tell me the dream, guess what? Being a part of my cabinet, being in the kingdom, you are going to lose your window view. There’s going to be no more casual Fridays. You will have to start flying the red-eye flights, and we’ll transfer you to another part of the nation.

No, here’s what he says. He says, if you cannot tell me this dream, I will take you, and I will cut you into little pieces, and then I will take your home and destroy it. That’s how serious this was. Imagine that inner office memo going out, right? That’s exactly what Nebuchadnezzar says, that this is such a big deal to me, that I will destroy your life if you cannot tell me this dream. This is your only purpose in my kingdom, but here’s the good news. This is kind of funny to me. If you tell me the dream, you will win the publisher’s clearinghouse sweepstakes. You will receive gifts from me and rewards and great honor, so tell me the dream, and interpret it to me, and your life will be very, very well. You will have much bliss and live forever, right? Is essentially what they are saying. Verse 7, once more they replied that the king tell his servants the dream, and we’ll interpret it. And the king is getting more frustrated.

He’s saying this in verse 8, I’m sure that you are trying to gain time. You are wasting my time because you realize that this is what I have firmly decided. Listen, if you do not tell me the dream, there is only one penalty for you. You have conspired to tell me this. You are misleading, and you are bringing up wicked things hoping that the situation will change, so then tell me the dream and I will know that you can interpret it for me. You shouldn’t have to have me tell it to you for me to interpret it. Now here is the epicenter of what we are talking about this morning, this is the tension of the story. This is where we find the whole theme in verse 10. Listen to this, the astrologers answered the king, there is no one on earth who can do what the king asks. No king and no human however great and mighty has ever asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or astrologer. Look, we are only supposed to pull bunnies out of hats and make coins disappear. We are supposed to like cut that lady in half and put her back together. That’s our job. You are asking us to do something completely impossible.

What the king asks is too difficult. No one can reveal this to the king except the gods, and they do not live among humans. In Daniel 2:10-11, the king, it is impossible, only a god that is supernatural can accomplish such a task. There is no way we can do what you ask. See how the story begins to build and create tension? God’s sovereignty here is beginning to play out. He’s reminding Nebuchadnezzar, your heart is like a channel of water, and I’m beginning to turn it because no human can do what I can do. No amount of anxiety, no amount of worry can do what God’s sovereignty can do. No one on earth can tell you this dream, only a god can, but which god will win the day? We can thrive through what seems impossible by remembering that there is only one God that can predict our future. There is only one God that can predict your future. Remember throughout the Bible, 66 books, story after story from the Old Testament runs a thread all the way through to the New Testament to the end,
and it says this, the theme that the wisdom of humanity is exposed as foolishness to God. Moses and Aaron defeating the magicians and God’s a Pharaoh in Exodus 7. Elijah on Mount Carmel exposes the deception of god Baal in I Kings 18. Jeremiah confronted the false prophet, Paul called out the foolishness of the counterfeit sorcerer in Acts 13. Jesus by his sacrificial death declared the wisdom of the world foolish and hopeless without God in I Corinthians 1:18. The statement by all of the wise counsel of the king in Daniel 2, out of their own mouths, they begin to condemn their own practices.

You see, what we are supposed to do, we cannot do, but we believe that there probably is a god who can tell you, who will come through, who will win this day. So in Daniel 2:12-13, King Nebuchadnezzar says, well, guess what? Then there’s total annihilation. Of everyone who is remotely considered wise will be put to death. Anybody in the kingdom of Babylon will be put to death. Anyone who considers themselves wise will be put to death. This is such a highly important issue with the king that he sent his personal guard Arioch out. Arioch comes and Daniel is bold, and Daniel says this, then allow me to stand before the king and ask for time. I need 24 hours. I need some time. Notice how the king’s sorcerers and chancers ask for more time and the response of the king is no, but when Daniel does, it’s granted, and so look what happen in verse 14. When Arioch the commander of the king’s guards had gone out to put to death the wise men of Babylon, Daniel spoke to him with wisdom and tact. That’s a great thing to remember. Daniel did not panic. He did not stress out. He did not cry out. He did not begin to pace the floor. He says with wisdom and tact, why did the king issue such a harsh decree? Arioch then explains the matter to Daniel. At this Daniel went into the king and asked for time. Verse 17, then Daniel returned to his house and explained the matter to his friends, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah. He urged them to plead for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery so that he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men in Babylon. During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision, then Daniel began to praise God. The worship of God by Daniel is exciting, and Daniel chapter 2:20-23, 15 times in four verses, Daniel makes mention of God and His sovereign plans. Verse 23, You have made known to us the dream of the king. No sorcerer, no enchanter, no magician, no astrologer, no human, only God.

We can thrive by remembering only the God of heaven knows all things, and the God of heaven can do all things. So here’s -- the story begins to unravel in verse 25. Arioch now takes Daniel to the king and says, guess what, king, I found a guy. I found the guy that can tell you this dream. We are all going to be saved, not just Daniel, right? If he gets it right, hopefully? Can you imagine the sorcerers and chancers and all of the wizards and everybody going, please, let him tell him the dream, we are saved, come on. I found a man among the exiles of Judah who can tell the king his dream. In verse 26 there are three words that I want you to circle because king Nebuchadnezzar’s response is our response in life. King Nebuchadnezzar says this, Daniel replied -- or the king asked Daniel also called Belteshazzar, are you able? There have been dark moments in my life. There have been moments I have hit the wall spiritually, and just as a man, when I have felt guilt and shame from the enemy that is insurmountable, and I feel like there are days I can’t even get out of bed and I ask that question that King Nebuchadnezzar asked, are you able? Is your God able? Will He come through? Will He win this day? Because what I am facing or what I have faced in my past, or what I’m facing now seems like a mountain, and there is no way I’m going to get through this. This is a dark moment, and I hear the dead bolt lock from the gates of heaven, and I cry out, and I ask God, God, are you able? And King Nebuchadnezzar asks the same thing, are you able?

And look at Daniel’s response. No wise men, no enchanter, no magician, no diviner can explain to the king the mystery he asks about, but listen, there is a God in heaven who can, and we need to remember that. 2600 years ago the Book of Daniel was written, and I believe fully in the providence and sovereignty of God. I believe this book was written to tell us of a coming Messiah and we can bank our lives on the sovereignty of God. That He is in complete control and intimately concerned about every detail in our life. That’s what he says and Daniel responds to king. He says, guess what, I cannot do it. No man can do it. No human possible. It’s humanly impossible, but guess what? There is a God in heaven who can. He will win the day. He will be there, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown the King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come.

Your dream and the visions that passed through your mind in bed are these, as Your Majesty was lying in there, your mind turned to the things to come and the revealer of mysteries showed you what was going to happen. As for me, this has been revealed to me not because of what I can do, but because of God, but so that Your Majesty may know the interpretation and that you may understand what went through your mind. You see Daniel is reminding us of four powerful words, there is a God. There is a God in heaven, and He sees you. You are his Imago Dei. You are his image. You are created in His Image. He knows everything that’s going on in your life, and when life crashes, and when the bottom drops out, and we cannot feel like we can face another tomorrow, and the things and the decisions we need to make are too great, I want to remind you of this, there is a God, and He sees, and He hears and He is concerned, and He is there for you.

In Daniel 2:31-35 Daniel begins to interpret the dream. Oh king, the dream that you have dreamt about that is beginning to bring restlessness to your heart, to your mind, to your spirit there is a great metal statue, enormous, dazzling, awesome in power. All of the kingdoms of the earth will see this massive statute, this beautiful statue that has risen out of the ground. Everyone will notice and see this and see the beauty and splendor and awesomeness of this awesome statue, but guess what, king? Here’s what’s going to happen, there is a precious stone that time after time comes in and destroys that beautiful, awesome statue, and every time that statue begins to keep building and building, there is a stone that is going to come in and destroy it. King here’s the interpretation. These are nations of earth. Every time the nation comes to power, that precious stone comes in and destroys it. Then guess what another nation rises to power, and that precious stone is going to come in and destroy that, and then another nation and another nation and another nation, and every time this stone comes in and destroys and destroys but in the end, that stone begins to be created into a massive mountain that never is destroyed.

And in I Peter 2:6, the Bible says this, and Jesus is talking. Therefore it is also enclosed in scripture, behold, Jesus says, I lay in Zion, I am the chief
cornerstone elect, precious, and he who believes in me, the Bible says, is what? Will no longer be shaken. Jesus says that I am the cornerstone so Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel says, guess what that stone is? That is the stone of Jesus Christ, and he will establish a kingdom someday that will never be destroyed. His sovereignty will win. It will win out and nations will come into control, and guess what? Every time Jesus will come in and destroy that kingdom and eventually set up his kingdom that will never be destroyed, and in I Peter Jesus says this, you can bank on that. It is enclosed in Scripture. It is sealed in Scripture. This is a trust worthy thing by the messiah the king of kings, that there will be a day I will establish my kingdom. I will be the cornerstone and every tribe, tongue and nation, every king, president or Prime Minister there ever has will be or in the future will become will bow to me and recognize that I am the King and my kingdom will never, ever be destroyed.

He will win, and that is the interpretation that Daniel tells King Nebuchadnezzar. In Psalm 2, it says this, that the kingdoms of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against His anointed, and you know what God's response is? God says, I laugh. I laugh at all of the wisdom that this world offers. It will not last. You see The Lord speaks of how the nations of earth scheme, plot and strategize against God's sovereignty, his will and his plans because they are in power and they believe they are in control and can change history and God's plans. The Bible says that God laughs at this, because when you compete with the God of the universe and His wisdom, it will not last. Because they think they are truly in control, God says there will be a day when I come back and every nation will know who I am.

We can thrive knowing that God will win, and His kingdom will never be destroyed. If you look in Daniel 2:44, here's what happens. In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. Daniel is saying this to Nebuchadnezzar, it will crush all of those kingdoms, yes, King Nebuchadnezzar, your kingdom will be crushed, and it will bring them to an end, but it itself will endure forever. This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of the mountain, but not by human hands. A rock that will break the iron, a rock that will break the bronze, a rock that will break the clay, a rock that will break silver, a rock that will destroy gold. The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true, and its interpretation is trustworthy.

Remember Proverbs 21 that the king's heart is like channels of water to God. Look what happens in verse 46. Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostate before Daniel and paid him honor and ordered that an offering of incense be presented to him, and then he says this. The all powerful King Nebuchadnezzar who destroyed the sacred things in the Temple, who made it known to the Israelites that Yahweh will not save the day says this, Daniel, surely your God is the God of Gods and the Lord of Lords and the revealer of mysteries for you were able -- your God is able to reveal this mystery. God changed the heart of Nebuchadnezzar, so what is our response?

What does this look like to remember? What do I remember? I can thrive by remembering that only the God of heaven knows all, and the God of heaven can do all things when we remember three things by surrounding, by surrendering and by submitting. Watch the principles that happen in Daniel's life and what he does. They are no different. If Daniel could stand on the stage today, he would be much shorter. If Daniel could stand on the stage today, he would cry out and tell you this 2600 years ago, 600 years before the birth of Christ, 2,000 years afterwards, Daniel could stand on this stage and he would tell you the three things, the three principles that he did that made his thinking right and pointed his feet to following Jesus. The first thing he did was surrounded himself. Daniel 2:17, what happens when he finds out he's going to be executed? He doesn't panic. He doesn't fret. He doesn't get into a dark place. What does he do? He gets together those who are deeply with him, who deeply care about him, and he begins to pray. He gets Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and he says, guys, here's what's going on. We need to pray. We are going to pray through the night, and we are going to ask God for his mercy. We are going to ask God to change the circumstances so we will not be executed, but if he does not change, and we are executed, we will still trust and believe in God's sovereignty.

Moment after moment after moment, this is Daniel's prayer, this is the theme in Daniel. We will trust regardless of the circumstances, even though our feelings are not in line with our hearts and what we know as the facts, we will trust the sovereignty of God, and he gathers his friends together, and they begin to pray. The second thing, Daniel surrenders the impossible over to God. There have been dark moments in my life, where it felt like God was not going to show up, and what it took was ultimately me opening my hands and saying, God, I surrender the circumstances to you. I don't know the outcome. I don't know what is going to happen, but I trust you regardless of how I feel. Daniel 2:18 says this, that he pleads for mercy, but then he places the situation in God's hands, and then what happens? He goes to bed. Normal guy, right? He goes to bed. That is profound. Because he says, you know what? I cannot do anymore. I can't do any more. I trust God. I trust His sovereignty. I'm going to bed and allowing the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God to work, and that's what happens. The Spirit of God begins to work through the night and reveals the mystery to Daniel in a dream while he's sleeping, and the last thing Daniel does in Daniel 2:20-23, Daniel submits his life in worship.

Daniel worshiped God. Regardless of how I feel, regardless of not knowing the outcome. I will raise my hands to the God of heaven, and I will worship Him. I will call out in a cry of desperation, that God, you are still in control, that when I hit the wall, I will worship you. I will follow you. I will proclaim that you are good, and your love endures forever. I read a story a couple of years ago about some navy seals performing a covert operation. Their objective was to free hostages from a building in some dark part of the world, and so the team flew in by helicopter, and they made their way to the compound, and they stormed into the room where the hostages were imprisoned for months. The room was filthy and dark. The hostages were actually curled up in the corner of room, and they were terrified. They believed that there was no way out of the situation. There was no way out of the darkness. When the seals entered the room, they heard the gasp of the hostages.

They stood at the door and called to the prisoners, hey, we are here to rescue you. Follow us. We are here to take you home. You can trust us.
Come on. The seals asked the hostages to follow them, but the hostages would not move. They lay there on the floor, and they hid their eyes in fear. The seals stood there and began to look at each other knowing, we have to get these people out, but we do not know what to do. They couldn’t possibly carry out everybody. Then one of the seals got a great idea. He put down his weapon, and he took off his helmet, and he curled tightly next to the other hostages, getting so close that his body was touching theirs. He softened the look on his face, and he put his arms around them. You see, he was trying to show them that he was one of them. None of the prison guards would have done this. He stayed there for a little while until some of the hostages started to look at him. Finally meeting their eyes, the navy seal, this big guy began to whisper, you can trust me. I have come to save you. I have come to take you out of the situation.

You can trust me. You can follow me. I am here. The hero stood to his feet, and one of the hostages did the same, and then one after another until all of them were willing to go, they made it to safety. God became man to be with us. He never promised that He would take us out. He never promised us that He would change the situation, but He promised that He would be there. That the sovereign God of the universe will be there for us, and that we can follow Him, and we can trust Him. We can thrive by remembering that the God who can do all things is the God who also knows all things. Let’s pray.

Father, we set here today, and we can know all of the big stories of the Bible. We even know that we are supposed to trust, but there are times when that just seems impossible. Lord, I think of this room right now. There are people that are setting here who are struggling, who just need to hear that You see them, that You are here, that the dead bolt that locked will be reopened, that You are not silent, that You are at work, and that You have come to rescue. Amen.