

Daniel's Determination against Defilement

Text: Daniel 1:1-8

Introduction:

1. This chapter introduces us to Daniel and his three godly friends. It contains a tremendous challenge concerning living in purity in a wicked and hostile environment. Daniel is a tremendous example of a man who would not compromise on his godly convictions.
2. It often said in the world that "every man has his price." In other words, your price is the point you are willing to sell out. This may be true in the world, but it should not be true of the believer! Daniel is an example of a man who did not have a price tag on his Bible-based convictions.
3. We will study this test of Daniel and his godly resolve under three divisions

I. Daniel's Captivity (Vs. 1-3)

A. The Sovereignty over his Captivity (Vs. 1-2)

1. God 'gave' Judah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, using him as an instrument of chastisement in the nation. This was the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah 39:6 and 2 Kings 20:17-18 on account of Hezekiah's compromise. The seed of compromise can yield bitter fruit in later generations even after we have departed this life.
2. God allowed Daniel to be selected for the first wave of captives. God can use difficult and painful circumstances to get us to where He wants us to be so that we might live out his purposes for us. God was going to use Daniel to be a mighty witness before some of the most powerful rulers in the world at that time in history.
3. F.W. Faber – "Ill that God blesses is our good, and un-blest good is ill; And all is right that seems most wrong, If it be His sweet will."

B. The Sorrow of his Captivity (Vs. 3)

1. Imagine the sorrow of Daniel as he witnessed the defeat of his beloved city and likely the death of family and friends in the siege.
2. Imagine the sorrow he must have felt being torn away from his home, family and all that was familiar.

C. The Spirituality before his Captivity

1. Daniel was obviously part of a godly remnant in the midst of a nation that had largely forsaken God at that time.
2. Jerusalem was in a deplorable spiritual condition at that time under the evil influence of wicked Jehoiakim. Each victory in the Christian life prepares us for the greater battles we will face later on (e.g. David fought the lion and bear before Goliath)

God Reigns – Daniel Series

II. Daniel's Circumstances (Vs. 4-7)

Daniel found himself in a challenging and vulnerable position as a young man. He faced:

A. A New Location (Vs. 1-3)

1. What a trial this must have been for Daniel to witness the destruction of his beloved city of Jerusalem and then to be marched off to a strange country as a spoil of war.
2. Like Joseph, Daniel faced the challenge of being in a strange place without the comforts and protection of a godly home.
3. Challenge: It is when we are outside of the protective influence of others that the true caliber of our Christian walk will be manifest.

B. A New Education (Vs. 4)

1. The selection of the students (4a)
 - a. Physical requirements – they were to be handsome
 - b. Intellectual requirements – they were to have wisdom
2. The schooling of the students (4b)
 - a. The Literature of Babylon.
 - i. Babylon famous for its learning at that time in history. The word 'learning' comes from the word 'book'. Archeological discoveries have revealed Babylon's ancient libraries and intellectual genius.
 - ii. "They were famous for their architecture and engineering. This enabled them to construct fantastic things such as their double walls (space enough for two four-horse chariots to pass), the tower of Babel, hanging gardens and irrigation projects." They were masters in mathematics, having developed early forms of calculus and trigonometry. (David Cloud)
 - iii. Some of what they would be taught would be helpful such as Mathematics but their education would also include being steeped in the philosophies and culture of idolatrous Babylon.
 - b. The Language of Babylon

C. A New Temptation (Vs. 5)

1. "king's meat" = this was royal fair. The word 'meat' means delicacies or dainties and these would be the best luxuries in the kingdom. Temptation is hard to resist when it comes from such a source of power and prominence. It is easier to turn down temptation from an unimportant source. Temptation appeals not only to the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes but also to the pride of life.
2. "wine" = Babylon famous for its drunken feasts (e.g. Belshazzar in chapter 5)

God Reigns – Daniel Series

3. This temptation would have particular appeal to young men like Daniel who were a long way from home and holiness. Many young people fall into sin when away from godly influences (e.g. university)

D. A New Description (Vs. 6-7)

1. The meaning of their Hebrew names
 - a. Each of the Hebrew names contained part of a Divine title of the God of Israel. "In days of old most names were theophoric, i.e. they had the name of the deity incorporated." (Leupold)
 - b. Daniel = God is my judge
 - c. Hananiah = mercy of Jehovah
 - d. Mishael = Who is like God?
 - e. Azariah = Jehovah will help
2. The meaning of their Babylonian names
 - a. Belteshazzar = Bel's prince or treasurer
 - b. Shadrach = command of Aku (moon god)
 - c. Meshach = who is like Aku (moon god)
 - d. Abednego = servant of Nebo
3. The motive behind their name changing
 - a. They wanted to take God out of their lives and out of their thinking.
 - b. It was "to wean them away from their land and religion, and get them to adopt the religion and habits of the heathen nations where their future was to be spent." (Larkin)
 - c. "They were given Babylonian names to separate them from their Jewish roots and to stamp them with Babylonian character." (David Cloud)
 - d. The world tries to squeeze us into its mold by forcing its ungodly ideals and philosophies upon us (e.g. political correctness in the workplace). The world speaks much about diversity but in reality, the world is more interested in conformity and uniformity.
 - e. They changed these men's names but they couldn't change their hearts! The world may try and pressurize us with its ideals and identity but with God's strength we can live above it!

III. Daniel's Convictions (Vs. 8)

Despite the unfavorable and difficult circumstances, Daniel stood for the Lord due to his godly convictions. There are 7 qualities of his godly convictions worth noting:

A. The Significant Timing of His Convictions – 'but'

1. This is one of the most pivotal words in the entire life of Daniel. If it weren't for Daniel's godly decision as a young man, we wouldn't have the rest of the Book.

God Reigns – Daniel Series

2. It is so important to have godly convictions as a teenager/young adult.
3. Daniel's age: To live into the reign of Cyrus (Dan. 1:21; 10:1) meant Daniel lived about 70 years after he was taken captive. He would have been a young man at the time of his selection. Keil and Delitzsch state that the typical age for this type of selection was between 15-20 years old.
4. W.A Criswell – “Practically every life-coloring decision that we make has been made when we were young...The friends that we choose, the life's companion that we marry, the habits that we acquire, the vocation that we follow, almost all of these decisions are made when we are young. We can read the evening of life in the morning of life.”
5. C.H. Spurgeon – “Very much of our future life will depend upon our earliest days.”

B. The Stoutheartedness of his Convictions – ‘purposed’

1. Daniel showed courage in the face of *consequences*. To defy the king's orders usually meant death. Daniel obviously feared God more than he feared the king of Babylon.
 - a. Illustration: A pastor once said to David Cloud, “You are very brave to preach against so many things.” Bro. Cloud said he could have replied, “You are brave not to!” It simply depends on whom you fear the most, man or God.
 - b. Richard Wurmbrand – “*A man really believes not what he recites in his creed, but only the things he is willing to die for.*”
2. Daniel showed courage in the face of *compromise*. Most of the other Jewish captives chose the easy road of compromise and didn't stand with Daniel and his three friends (Note Vs. 10 “*than the children which are of your sort*”). To stand for God often means standing alone or standing with the minority. There will always be those who will trade their convictions for fleshly lusts, convenience and popularity (e.g. Esau who sold his birthright)

C. The Seat of his Convictions – “in his heart”

1. The heart is the inner most part of a person, the seat of the affections. Daniel's convictions went beyond his head, they were imprinted on his heart.
2. Butler – “Most people have little or no convictions especially in the area of character. They are like a chameleon which changes colors with its environment. They are like a thermometer which tells the temperature, not a thermostat which controls the temperature. They cannot be counted on to be loyal, but will bend which ever direction the wind blows.”
3. Daniel did not fall prey to “situational ethics”. He did not allow his circumstances to dictate his decisions.

God Reigns – Daniel Series

D. The Source of his Convictions – “that he would not defile himself”

1. Daniel’s convictions came from the Word of God. That Daniel was a man well acquainted with the Scriptures is abundantly evident in this Book.
 - a. Certain meats were prohibited the Jews (Lev. 11)
 - b. These meats would also have been dedicated to idols
 - c. Wine and strong drink forbidden by the Word of God
2. Good, godly convictions come to those who saturate themselves in the Scriptures.
 - a. Psalm 119:11 *“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, **that I might not sin against thee.**”*
 - b. Psalm 119:104 *“Through thy precepts I get understanding: **therefore I hate every false way.**”*

E. The Sensibleness of his Convictions - “therefore he requested”

1. Daniel was firm and unmovable in his godly convictions but respectful and wise in his dealings with his master. He made a courteous request, not an abrasive demand.
2. We can have convictions without being cranks! Someone has said prudence, politeness and pluck are a great trio. (Denis Lyle)

F. The Steadfastness of his Convictions

1. Daniel persisted despite the opposition he faced to his convictions (Vs. 10-13)
2. Daniel did not take a 2-minute stand and then buckle at the knees. He was resolute and determined.

G. The Sway of his Convictions

1. While most of the other Jewish captives did not follow Daniel’s lead, he was a godly influence on his three friends who were inspired to stand with him. We are all influencing someone.
2. Later on, these same three men would stand alone, seemingly without Daniel’s leadership and support. Taking a stand in the smaller things prepares the way for standing on the bigger things.

Conclusion:

1. How firm are your convictions? Do you have convictions based on the Word of God that you are not prepared to compromise on?
2. What kind of influence are we upon others? Are we willing to stand or do we blend in with the compromises?