

“Risky Faith”  
Daniel 1:8-9  
(Preached at Trinity, February 23, 2014)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. We've been looking at the opening verses of the Book of Daniel. I think it's hard for us to grasp the full measure of what was taking place in the life of this young man. At this point he was probably between 15-17 years of age. He was taken away from his home and culture and carried off to a strange land. And in this land he was being enticed with every kind of temptation. He was being trained with the best education in the land and being fed with the riches that came from the king's own table.  
Daniel refused to partake.
2. Daniel was at the age where many professing Christians make serious compromises. I can't tell you how often I hear testimonies that speak of coming to faith at an early age and then straying through the teenage years. The sins of youth are powerful. But does God excuse the sins of our youth? Paul warns:  
**2 Timothy 2:22 NAU** - "Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."  
Knowing the judgment of God David prayed:  
**Psalm 25:7 NAU** - "Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions"
3. God's Word strengthens people of all ages and protects them from the foolishness of their own heart.  
**Proverbs 1:2-4 NAU** - "To know wisdom and instruction, To discern the sayings of understanding, <sup>3</sup> To receive instruction in wise behavior, Righteousness, justice and equity; <sup>4</sup> To give prudence to the naive, To the youth knowledge and discretion"
4. Although Daniel was young he had learned that there was one true God. His heart was stirred with a lively faith in this God. Daniel had determined in his heart that he was going to serve this God, no matter the cost.  
**Daniel 1:8 NAU** - "But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank"
5. Daniel recognized the importance of maintaining his integrity before God. He was a man of principle. At this young age he knew that there were standards of obedience that must not be broken.
6. Most professing Christians today know little of what it means to follow Christ. They know little of the demands of discipleship. The Christianity we find in America today is a religion of convenience. People will serve Christ when it is convenient.  
For example:
  - a. 2008 – 76% of Americans professed to be Christian but only 9 percent said their religion was the most important thing in their lives. Only 4% of Americans tithe.

- b. Even among those who attend church regularly their attendance is often a matter of convenience. Most Baptist churches have SS, AM & PM services and a mid-week service. Very few attend them all regularly. Our church is remarkable but even we have a few who follow this pattern of inconsistency.  
Many American churches are doing away with the Sunday evening Service.
  - c. How many today take their relationship with Christ seriously enough to suffer?
7. Tonight I want to look again at this wonderful peek into the life of Daniel. There are two things I want to set before you: Risky Obedience and Bold Faith

## I. Risky Obedience

- A. The question we must ask is what if the official refused his request?
  - 1. Daniel was in a strange land. He was under their control. The official could have easily told Daniel that Nebuchadnezzar wasn't willing to negotiate
  - 2. We read in **Chapter 1** that it turned out well for Daniel but what if Daniel faced hostility? What if they denied his request at the threat of great personal harm?  
The text tells us that Daniel had made a determination in his heart.  
**Daniel 1:8 NAU** - "But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself"
  - The word for "mind" is בָּנֶה which is often translated heart.
  - 3. Daniel was resolved to follow God, period.  
He was prepared to risk all in following God.  
We will see later in this book that hungry lions and fiery furnaces would not deter these young men from faithfulness to God.
  - 4. Daniel lived in this strange and godless land for over 70 years. Most of his life remains a mystery. There must have been many times when he had to take a stand; many times when he refused to compromise.
- B. What kind of risks are you willing to take?
  - 1. Too often Christians make what they consider "little" concessions  
No longer are Christians a distinctly different people. There is a spirit of lawlessness abounding. Radical obedience is now relabeled legalism.  
Jerry Bridges writes of sins we easily dismiss: discontent, ingratitude, pride, selfishness, anger, a censorious spirit, envy & jealousy, worldliness.
  - 2. Christianity is a radical life and it is not without risk and sacrifice.  
**Luke 14:33 NAU** - "So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions."  
Too often Christians behave like the thousands of other Israelites that entered Babylon and ate their food and adopted their foreign names and became like the Babylonians.
  - 3. The human heart does not easily part with its idols. This was the problem of the Rich Young Ruler  
**Matthew 19:21-22 NAU** - "go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." <sup>22</sup> But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property."

4. There are tremendous pressures for us to compromise
  - a. Family presents pressure.
    - It takes great dedication to train up children. It is always easier to let them have their own way. Having children demands constant supervision. Few parents are up to the task.  
As they get older they will often cry out for you to compromise – materialism (the latest gadget), immorality, bad company.
    - There are huge pressures with lost family members, particularly if the spouse is lost.  
Are you willing to stand up and proclaim, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”
  - b. It demands great determination to follow Christ in the environment of lost people at the workplace. What if your boss asks you to compromise? Will you boldly live before all men as the servant of Christ?
  - c. Our flesh also makes huge demands  
**Romans 6:6-7 NAU** - "knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; <sup>7</sup> for he who has died is freed from sin."  
It is amazing how easily many absent themselves from attendance. Everything from sniffles to being tired.
  - d. This present world is a continual influence upon our lives  
**1 John 2:15-16 NAU** - "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup> For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world."
5. But I've titled this section "Risky Obedience." We can hardly call bringing your life in order in these things, "Risky Obedience."  
What if worshipping God becomes a crime?  
What if owning a Bible will result in jail time?  
If you aren't willing to bring the small things under God's dominion how shall you expect to stand when it is a matter of great risk?  
A person who can't deny himself the Super Bowl on Sunday will have little chance of standing boldly when threatened with great personal risk.
6. We should always ask ourselves, how would my life be different if I were not a Christian? How does your life in Christ affect your decisions, your actions – your family, your parenting.

## II. Bold Faith

- A. Daniel trusted that God would provide  
**Daniel 1:12-13 NAU** - "Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink. <sup>13</sup> Then let our appearance be observed in your presence and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king's choice food; and deal with your servants according to what you see."

1. It was so amazing that Calvin believed Daniel must have received a special revelation from God.
  2. I believe Daniel was simply demonstrating a bold trust in God. We'll see this again in **Chapter 3**  
**Daniel 3:17-18 NAU** - "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. <sup>18</sup> "But even if *He* does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."
  3. That is bold faith  
C.F. Keil in the classic Keil & Delitzsch Commentary wrote:  
"The request is perfectly intelligible from the nature of living faith, without our having recourse to Calvin's supposition, that Daniel had received by secret revelation, the assurance that such would be the result if he and his companions were permitted to live on vegetables."  
He called it rather, "The confidence of living faith which hopes in the presence and help of God."
  4. To live boldly upon the earth you must have confidence in the faithfulness of God; to know that He will be faithful through every circumstance. This is particularly demonstrated during trials.  
**1 Peter 1:7 NAU** - "so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ"
- B. Bold faith isn't the same thing as foolish folly
1. Daniel was demonstrating bold obedience; obedience that is willing to suffer the consequence.
  2. This isn't the same thing as foolish risk taking.
    - a. Would it be bold faith for a church our size to borrow \$2 million to purchase a church building or foolish risk taking? Can we simply claim we are trusting God?  
Before we sold our old building people would often approach us and say God had told them they were supposed to have our building—even though they had no money.
    - b. Should a father take his young children to the mission field in Afghanistan? I'm not saying it could never occur. But it might be nothing more than foolish risk taking. The Bible commands parents to nurture and protect their children, not endanger them.
    - c. There are stories of Christians selling all their possessions because of the belief in a certain date for Christ to return. They were absolutely convinced that this was the right thing to do.  
Was it risk taking or foolish folly?
    - d. A pastor neglects his family in the labors of his ministry. Is he to be commended for his dedication? No he is to be rebuked.
  3. Bold faith is not foolishness. But bold faith will risk all in order to obey the commands of Christ.

C. Was Daniel afraid?

1. We are not told that Daniel had any fears but even with bold faith we can have apprehension  
Paul expressed:

**1 Corinthians 2:3-5 NAU** - "I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling,<sup>4</sup> and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,<sup>5</sup> so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God."

2. The difference faith makes is we deliver our fears over to God  
**Psalm 56:3** – "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee"  
**Psalm 56:4** – "In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me."
3. We are not told if Daniel was afraid but we surely see that he was bold to serve the living God.

D. Will you trust God with every aspect of your life?

1. To live boldly upon the earth you must have confidence in the faithfulness of God; to take seriously His Word and His promises.
2. For example, to trust that God blesses the honoring of His Sabbath Day  
**Isaiah 58:13-14 NAU** - "If because of the sabbath, you <sup>a</sup>turn your foot From doing your <sup>c</sup>own pleasure on My holy day, And call the sabbath a <sup>b</sup>delight, the holy <sup>d</sup>ay of the LORD honorable, And honor it, desisting from your <sup>c</sup>own ways, From seeking your <sup>c</sup>own pleasure And <sup>d</sup>speaking your <sup>c</sup>own word,<sup>14</sup> Then you will take <sup>a</sup>delight in the LORD, And I will make you ride <sup>b</sup>on the heights of the earth; And I will feed you *with* the heritage of Jacob your father, For the <sup>c</sup>mouth of the LORD has spoken."

Question: How would you spend the Sabbath Day if God had not declared it to be holy? For many “liberty” means “disregard.”

- a. LBC: 23:8  
“The sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord, when men, after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering their common affairs beforehand, do not only observe an holy rest all the day, from their own works, words and thoughts, about their worldly employment and recreations,<sup>30</sup> but also are taken up the whole time in the public and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy.”
- b. Can you have a faith bold enough to believe that God will bless obedience to His Day?
- c. Sunday is a big day for the restaurant business. Chick-fil-a made the determination to trust God and not to violate the Sabbath. Years ago I closed my own fried chicken restaurant on the Lord’s Day. The God who owns all things can provide.

3. But I can't afford to tithe. Can you have a bold faith to trust Him? God says,  
**Malachi 3:8-10 NAU** - "Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. <sup>9</sup> "You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation *of you!* <sup>10</sup> "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows."
4. Will you trust God at work? Will you maintain your integrity in an environment where you are supposed to check your faith at the door? You say, "But I will lose my job if I don't fudge the figures." Can you have a faith bold enough trust God in such conditions?
5. Will you trust God with your relationships? But I will lose my friends. My family will turn against me. Can you trust God?
6. Will we trust God as a church? We have upheld church discipline in our church. We have maintained high standards for teachers. We've lost two members as a result. We've upheld confessional integrity and have lost members as a result.
7. The time may come in our land when it may cost God's people dearly to follow Him. Will we trust Him?

#### Conclusion:

1. We must never forget that our life is not all that different from Daniel's. He was a child of God living in a strange land. We too are living in a land that is not our own. The Bible calls us aliens and strangers. In such a setting we must remain alert to remain holy.  
**1 Peter 2:11 NAU** - "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul."
2. We are also living in a day that will swallow us up. We are being constantly pressured to conform to this world. We are pressured to talk like them, dress like them, and love the things they love. And it all seems so normal. It seems right.  
 We must determine in our hearts that we will not be defiled by the dainties of this world.
3. And we must not miss the faithfulness of God upon the lives of these four young Hebrew children. We will never regret our service to our great God.