

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 7-1-12 AM NOTES
"LOYAL AMBASSADORS IN A FOREIGN LAND"
2 CORINTHIANS 5:20 AND VARIOUS PASSAGES IN DANIEL
(Non-Series Message)

2 Corinthians 5:20 (NKJV) "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God."

Isaiah 33:22 (NKJV) "For the Lord *is* our Judge, the Lord *is* our Lawgiver, the Lord *is* our King; He will save us."

Isaiah 63:10 (NKJV) "But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; so He turned Himself against them as an enemy, *and* He fought against them."

2 Chronicles 7:14 (NKJV) "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

2 Timothy 4:1-2 (NKJV) "¹I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: ²**Preach the word!** Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching."

Matthew 5:13-16 (NKJV) "¹³You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. ¹⁴You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house. ¹⁶Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

Philippians 3:20a (NKJV) "For our citizenship is in heaven..."

2 Corinthians 4:4 (ESV) "In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers..."

1 Peter 2:11 (HCSB) "Dear friends, I urge you as strangers and temporary residents to abstain from fleshly desires that war against you."

2 Corinthians 5:20 (NKJV) "...be reconciled to God."

Romans 1:16 (NKJV) "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek."

Three Strategies for Christians Living in This World:

1. Isolation
2. Conformity
3. God's Ambassadors

I. Loyal Ambassadors Refuse to Compromise God's Word (Daniel 1:1-8; 3:1-30)

Daniel 1:8 (NKJV) "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself."

Daniel 3:16-18 (NKJV) "16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17 If that *is the case*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver *us* from your hand, O king. 18 But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.'"

II. Integrity (Daniel 6:1-5)

Daniel 6:1-4 (NASB) "1 It seemed good to Darius to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom, that they would be in charge of the whole kingdom, 2 and over them three commissioners (of whom Daniel was one), that these satraps might be accountable to them, and that the king might not suffer loss. 3 Then this Daniel began distinguishing himself among the commissioners and satraps because he possessed an extraordinary spirit, and the king planned to appoint him over the entire kingdom. 4 Then the commissioners and satraps began trying to find a ground of accusation against Daniel in regard to government affairs; but they could find no ground of accusation or *evidence of corruption*, inasmuch as he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was *to be found* in him."

"Today the quality of our church people is at a frightening low. We are many but not much. Doing has become a substitute for being and we have failed on character. We are conformed to the age, but not to the image of God's Son."

—Vance Havner

Daniel 6:5 (NKJV) "Then these men said, 'We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find *it* against him concerning the law of his God.'"

2 Corinthians 10:4 (NIV) "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds."

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2 Corinthians 5:20 (NKJV) “Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.”

About 30 or 35 years ago the Christian philosopher and author Francis Schaeffer told us that one day we would wake up and find out that the America we once knew would be gone. That day he spoke of is now here. I love my country. I believe that God in His providential workings established this nation. Not all of our founding Fathers were Christians by the Biblical definition of that word, but most were. With one or two exceptions, those who were not Christians had a deep respect for the Bible and believed that there is a God to whom we will all be accountable. Many think that even the idea of our three branches of our government was loosely taken from the Scriptures, **Isaiah 33:22 (NKJV)** “For the Lord *is* our Judge, the Lord *is* our Lawgiver, the Lord *is* our King; He will save us”. Judge = Judicial branch; Lawgiver = Legislative branch; King = Executive branch. The evidences of God's providential hand upon our nation are obvious to all except those who have blinded eyes. Yet now, we see our nation caught in a mighty current of immorality, secularism, and socialist leaning thinking. The picture that comes to me is a ship without power headed toward Niagara Falls, helpless to turn back. Bible believing Christians have lost almost all of our influence on culture and now postmodernism and relativism have been almost universally accepted. The homosexual movement has won the acceptance they have sought. Individual states that seek to stop the movement toward nation wide acceptance of homosexual marriage have faced the courts and lost, having their laws struck down as being unconstitutional. Could it be that we have reached or are close to reaching the place that the Southern Kingdom of Israel reached when God said this about them: **Isaiah 63:10 (NKJV)** “But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; so He turned Himself against them as an enemy, *and* He fought against them.” All of us who love the Lord our God supremely and our country passionately grieve over the situation. Instead of singing “God Bless America”, we need to be singing, “God, what must America do to be blessed?”

What is God's solution for the situation in which we find ourselves? Certainly it involves His people's repentance and brokenness before Him. 2 Chronicles 7:14 was written to the nation Israel and I would not imply that America has the same relationship to God that Israel had, but I believe there is a principle in this verse that transcends Israel. **2 Chronicles 7:14 (NKJV)** “if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” As we humble ourselves and pray and seek His face and turn from our wicked ways, what else would God have us do? Certainly the action called for in 2 Chronicles 7:14 is first and ongoing, but what is our strategy beyond personal brokenness and seeking God's face? Some would say that the church must get together and flex its muscles. One well known Pastor of a large church has said he will stand in the pulpit in defiance of the IRS and make specific recommendations to his congregation as to who they should vote for. Is that God's

desired response by His church in light of the deterioration of our nation? Others believe that the church should get together and vote as a block, organize protests, boycotts and letter writing campaigns to sway policy. While I am usually in agreement with the stance on moral issues of those who advocate such tactics, I just don't see justification for that in the New Testament. I believe that every Pastor in America should speak what the Bible says about every issue our culture deals with. The biblical admonition to Pastors relating to this is **2 Timothy 4:1-2 (NKJV)** “¹ I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: ² Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.” However when it comes to how we influence and change culture, there are at least three pictures to instruct us as to how the Lord desires for His church to impact culture. Two of those ways are given to us by the Lord Himself in the Sermon on the Mount. **Matthew 5:13-16 (NKJV)** ¹³ "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. ¹⁴ You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house. ¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” Salt preserves and flavors what it comes in contact with. Christians are to engage the culture and in that culture they flavor and act as a retardant to the decay that happens when the culture is totally separated from biblical truth. The Christian is also to be like light (truth) in a dark culture devoid of the truth.

There is a third illustration in the New Testament of how true disciples of Jesus Christ impact culture. We have been placed in this alien culture as ambassadors of our King and sovereign – The Lord Jesus Christ. The picture of an ambassador is very meaningful. The ancient role of an ambassador was very similar to the role today. An ambassador was both a messenger for and a representative of his king in a foreign land. Just as ambassadors lived in a foreign land, so do Christians. Where is our citizenship? Where is home? **Philippians 3:20a (NKJV)** “For our citizenship is in heaven...” The world system (culture around us that leaves God out) is foreign territory ruled by a hostile king. **2 Corinthians 4:4 (ESV)** “In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers...” Since we are not citizens of this world, we are described in **1 Peter 2:11 (HCSB)** “Dear friends, I urge you as aliens and temporary residents to abstain from fleshly desires that war against you.” Remember that an ambassador has two main tasks: the ambassador is the messenger and representative of their king. As the messenger we carry this message: **2 Corinthians 5:20 (NKJV)** “...be reconciled to God.” That message in its fullness is the Gospel! We are here as Christ's ambassadors in this foreign land that has Satan as its god to proclaim a Gospel that is the power of God to change lives. **Romans 1:16 (NKJV)** “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”

Throughout Church history, there have been basically three different strategies by God's people for living in this world system:

1. Isolation – These sincere believers see the corruption of the world system and pull out and have nothing to do with the world or those in the world. They have their holy huddles and have nothing to do with the world. I admire their desire for holiness, but I believe

they are wrong. Remember that in Matthew 5:13-16 we are told by Jesus that we are salt and light. In order for salt to preserve and flavor, it has to come in contact with the meat that is rotting; in order for the light to chase away the darkness, it has to go into the darkness and shine.

2. Conformity – This group of “professing” Christians just adopt the world and its way of thinking. They don’t want to offend so they become secret disciples looking, acting, and thinking just like the world.

3. God’s Ambassadors – These true disciples of Jesus Christ are in the world but the world and its values are not in them. They are proactive in developing relationships with their neighbors and co-workers and other parents at the ball field with the intention of loving them and seeing them reconciled to God. Like salt, they go to those who are rotting; like light they go into the darkness and yet never take on the sin but love the sinners to Jesus. In my opinion, one of the best examples of God’s ambassadors in a foreign land is Daniel and his 3 friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. These three friends were sometimes better known by their Babylonian names, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. Let’s look at some principles about how to be Christ’s Ambassadors in a foreign land. Following these principles will do more to change our nation than all the protests we could organize.

I. Loyal Ambassadors Refuse to Compromise God’s Word (Daniel 1:1-8; 3:1-30)

Daniel, as an older teenager was likely raised in a privileged family situation and was of royal blood. Now, however, Babylon had come into power and began a long process of totally defeating the Southern Kingdom of Israel called Judah and ultimately overtaking the capital of Jerusalem and destroying its wall and the temple Solomon had built. The Babylonians deported the Jews back to Babylon in three stages over about 23 years. Daniel was deported to Babylon in the first stage. Daniel and his 3 friends were among the cream of the crop. They were enrolled in a crash course in the University of Babylon to “reprogram” them to become Babylonians, to conform them to a godless culture and worldview. What a picture of what the world system is doing today in trying to conform Christians to the world’s values and views. They were given Babylonian names, taught Babylonian ways, and fed Babylonian food. Daniel (and by implication, his three friends) didn’t object to the clothing or the education, but there was a problem with the food. In the Mosaic Law, God gave some very strict laws relating to what could be eaten (by the Jews) and how it was to be prepared. The purpose for the dietary laws was to maintain a separation between God’s chosen people and the nations around them. For Daniel under the old covenant, to eat the king’s food would be compromising a direct command of God. The main reason he couldn’t eat it and drink the wine is that they had been dedicated to Babylonian gods. To eat the food and drink the wine would violate Exodus 34:15. Daniel had earlier settled this dilemma in his mind. **Daniel 1:8 (NKJV)** “But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.”

We don’t have to wear some kind of special clothing identifying ourselves as Christians (though it should certainly be modest), nor do we have to have Christian names or use Christian lingo, but we must draw the line at obeying the direct commands of God in His word. The Lord’s ambassadors refuse to compromise God’s Word whatever the cost –

reputation, friends, job, status, or even our physical lives. We of course are not under the dietary laws, but we have commands and principles we must obey. If you are going to be a loyal ambassador of the Lord in a foreign land then there must be a purposed heart to never step over the line of disobedience to God whatever the consequences. That word “purposed” in verse 8 means to be set, to establish. Daniel had earlier drawn the lines. He would accept the world’s name, the world’s educational institutions, many of the world’s customs, and submit to the world’s rulers, but he would not disobey God’s clearly revealed word.

Later in the book of Daniel, we see that Daniel and his three friends (who obviously refused with Daniel to eat the food offered to idols) have been blessed by God and given places of influence in the Babylonian kingdom. Daniel is likely out of the country when the events of chapter three take place. The focus shifts to Daniel’s three friends. The egotistical king has set up an image that everyone is to bow to. Daniel’s three friends (Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah) had risen to places of influence in the government of Babylon and others became jealous and turned them in for not bowing before the image. The penalty was death by being burned in a furnace. The truth was (and is) that there is only one true God and we are to worship only Him. It would have been so easy to justify compromise here to avoid trouble in the world. Look however at the response of these three men, **Daniel 3:16-18 (NKJV)** “¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, ‘O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷ If that *is the case*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver *us* from your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.’” These men were very submissive to this pagan king’s authority. They obviously were helpful productive workers, but they would not compromise truth. Oh how God’s ambassadors need to be reminded of this. We live in a day where pragmatism rules. Pragmatism basically says that whatever works, whatever accomplishes our goal is right. We have a bunch of people watering down the gospel to make it more acceptable to our culture. Think of the compromise these three men (Hananiah, Mishiel, and Azariah) could have come up with using pragmatism. “We could bow, but in our mind we would be thinking of the true God.” “We need to bow because if we don’t, we will lose our place of influence and so because of the greater good we will compromise by bowing”. That’s how this generation of Christians thinks and that’s why America as it once was has disappeared. Most of you know the end of this story. They refused to compromise truth and God supernaturally delivered them and they were promoted in the government. If however things turned out differently, they would not be willing to compromise.

One of the reasons we have so little impact on our culture is that there is so little difference in God’s people and those in the world in areas of sin. The divorce rate among God’s people is virtually the same as the world. Couples professing to be His disciples live together without marriage. Those claiming to be His disciples use language that dishonors God, participate in unethical business practices, lie, deceive, become greedy for the world’s delicacies and fail to love anything like he loved. We’ve become like salt that’s lost its saltiness, a light that is hid under a basket, and an ambassador who forgets that he represents his king and his country and gives loyalty to the enemy king in the land where he has been sent to be a loyal ambassador. American culture is going down the tubes, not primarily because of the politicians or the drug dealers or the abortionists or the

pornographers; it is going down the tubes because those who profess to be God's people, the Lord's ambassadors, are more loyal to the culture than to the Lord and they have forgotten the message they have been sent here to deliver – "Be reconciled to God".

II. Loyal Ambassadors Live in Consistent Integrity (Daniel 6:1-5)

Daniel 6:1-4 (NASB) ¹ It seemed good to Darius to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom, that they would be in charge of the whole kingdom, ² and over them three commissioners (of whom Daniel was one), that these satraps might be accountable to them, and that the king might not suffer loss. ³ Then this Daniel began distinguishing himself among the commissioners and satraps because he possessed an extraordinary spirit, and the king planned to appoint him over the entire kingdom. ⁴ Then the commissioners and satraps began trying to find a ground of accusation against Daniel in regard to government affairs; but they could find no ground of accusation or *evidence of* corruption, inasmuch as he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was *to be* found in him." In Daniel 6, Daniel is an older man and his life all the way through was marked by integrity. Even the world's rulers recognized his integrity. Integrity has taken a real hit in our day! The sad thing is that it is almost as rare among those who profess to be Christ's disciples as it is in the culture that leaves God out! The old evangelist Vance Havner said it like this: **"Today the quality of our church people is at a frightening low. We are many but not much. Doing has become a substitute for being and we have failed on character. We are conformed to the age, but not to the image of God's Son."** The word integrity comes from a Latin word that means intact, entire, whole, or complete. Integrity is to the character what 20/20 vision is to sight. A person with integrity is not divided in his love for God and love for the world. A person with integrity is not divided between the ways of God and the ways of the world. From his teen years when we first meet Daniel to old age, Daniel was a man of undivided loyalties and devotion to God. He was a man of integrity. It showed up in his excellence in his studies as a young man, his excellence in how he carried out his responsibilities in his job in the Babylonian and later the Persian government. There ought to be a difference in the way Christian students apply themselves (whether it's Math, English, Science, Theology, or Business). Christians who are lazy on their job are guilty of stealing from their employer. Christians who call in sick when they are not sick are guilty of lying and stealing and have lost their integrity. Christians who half way do their work, put down their company or boss, sow discord among others have lost their integrity and have thus become ineffective disloyal ambassadors in this foreign world. One day we must give an account to our King as to how we have represented Him here in this world system. Isn't it interesting that even those who were jealous of Daniel and tried to discredit him and dig up some dirt couldn't find any! They had to resort to finding an area where his loyalty to God contradicted his loyalty to his earthly king. **Daniel 6:5 (NKJV)** "Then these men said, 'We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find *it* against him concerning the law of his God.'"

CONCLUSION

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were salt and light in a pagan culture. They were also ambassadors of their true King – their sovereign Lord. Whether they lived or died; whether they were imprisoned or free; whether they were burned in the fiery furnace or thrown into the lions den, they refused to compromise the direct commands of

God's Word, but they also lived with unquestionable integrity in the world. This is how God's people are going to change our nation. This is how we become people of influence. Certainly we must know what the Scriptures say regarding every issue that Politicians deal with, and we must vote according to where the Politicians stand with Scriptures, and we must be vocal about what the Bible says, but when we become passionate about holiness and integrity as loyal ambassadors of our King, we will have a platform from which we can share the powerful Gospel of Christ and see lives changed from the inside out. Remember that we don't fight with the same weapons that the world fights with. **2 Corinthians 10:4 (NIV)** "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds."