

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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SERIES

Far From Home

PART

2

TITLE

Resolved

SCRIPTURE

Daniel 1:3-21



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Well, Providence family, it's great to see you. I hope you've had a really good week. And if you're a guest with us here today, welcome, welcome to Providence. If you happen to be in the room or at home, or perhaps even in the other room over here, I just want to say hi to you. We're glad that you joined us.

If you have a Bible in your hand, turn with me to Daniel chapter one. We're in a series, it's called Far From Home, walking verse by verse through Daniel. And what Daniel really talks about is, how do you live when your world falls apart? And some of us, that's probably where we're at. And there's great hope and he wants to instruct us with these words. I'm sure it is for you, I know for me, it's very hard to watch people. And when I mean people, I don't mean just necessarily individuals, but I'm talking about masses of people, even cultures of people get so depleted in their soul and in their spirit that they begin to conform to what they know will destroy.

You can see it in people's lives. You can see that for many of us, this is true for many of us in the room right now, is that we had a dream at one time about what life was going to be like and now 10 years have passed and or more years have passed and it just doesn't look like that. Our dream, it didn't come to pass. Life looks a little different even today may look a little different than what we thought today would look like a year ago. And sometimes we get so depleted and sometimes people have no relationship with the Lord to where there's no other way that the only thing that they have is the mechanics and the strength that they can generate from their own heart. And when it gets so depleted and they simply look at a stream and the stream is literally running to a place to where it goes over the waterfall and people still get in the water knowing what is going to take place.

It was the American poet, Thoreau, who looked at this reality in humanity and said that, "the massive men lead lives of quiet desperation." And that's where many of us are at. That's where many in our nation are at. They don't like what's happening, but they have no other moral reserve. They have no other reserve of wisdom. They have no other options than to say, well, everyone else is doing it and it looks like it's going to end in collapse. And yet that's what everyone is doing. And I have no other way to live. And that's what I'll do. So many people, we all are, we're stuck in a broken world and we're living and spinning in a broken world with broken people, with broken families, broken leaders, broken institutions, broken cultures. And we live this in a broken body that the older we get the more it breaks and it carries around a broken spirit that wants more out of life. It wants more out of love. It wants more out of our relationships. It wants more out of our work. It wants more out of our play.

And many people, we look and people are just utterly, quietly desperate. Jesus had different words to describe this reality of humanity. He says, they are harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. Harassed literally means injured, beaten, slapped down. Helpless literally means to crawl up in a fetal position because you don't know what else to do. And this happens because people don't recognize that there's a good shepherd. But friends, let me tell you something, there is a good shepherd. He did come to the earth and as a result of that, we're not harassed, we are not helpless. We do not have to conform to what we know is going to destroy. In fact, the New Testament tells us to do just the opposite. It says, do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what

is good and acceptable and perfect.

And so notice some of these key words in here, is that God Almighty wants to renew our mind. He gives us the word of God and he gives us the spirit, his own spirit within our heart to illuminate his word so that our mind can be made new. That means that the categories and channels of thought, things that we have grown up, we've been living in a culture that's taught us all wrong, how to live, how to relate, how to love, how to keep loving, and there's no capital that they give to us. There's no resource, there's no help, and then it's a broken advice. And what it says is this, is that when we come and yield ourselves to the word of God, He makes our mind new again. And when our mind is new, we get to live and obey His word. And what happens is a transformation of our life to where we no longer have to conform to the world and simply look and say, well, everybody is getting into this fatal river, but I have no other option so I'll get in it as well.

The good shepherd came, he spoke to us words of life that can renew our mind and change our life. And the Bible tells us and wants to tell us some of the beautiful characteristics of the will of God. That means his plan for your life and my life. The words that he uses here are three, He says it's good. Now we use good as one of the four criteria of measuring rating things. It's like bad, fair, good, great. That's not what it means here. It means moral goodness, that there is this density of goodness that's packed into the will of God that when we obey his will, what happens is it creates a level of goodness in our homes and in our heart and in our culture. Not only is it marked by goodness, He says it's acceptable.

Now, He's not saying, now you're the judge. This is what it is. Is it acceptable to you? No, no, no. It's acceptable to Him. It creates lifestyles that are acceptable to Him. And what that means is this, is that when our life is acceptable to Him, Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit comes to the earth, and he already has, he's going to convict to the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. When you think about those first two, He convicts us of sin. When we do what's sinful, what's not acceptable to Him, He lets us know when we feel guilty. But then he says He convicts us of righteousness. What that means is that when our lifestyle is in accord with His word, it's acceptable to Him. He confirms His pleasure in our heart and it feels like peace, contentment, joy, joy. It's acceptable to Him.

And not only is it good and acceptable, He also says it's perfect. Now we think of perfection and we think of without flaw. And His word is that, but many of your translations may use the word instead of perfection, they use complete. And the idea here is that God doesn't give us instruction for 10 scenarios in life. And once you're in a scenario that's not one of those 10, He says, well, good luck. I don't know. You're on your own. No, it's complete. It's perfect. Meaning there's nothing that you're going through today that there's not satisfactory, sufficient, helpful wisdom that can renew your mind and transform your life so that you do not have to conform to a world that is leading towards destruction. Now, isn't that good news? That God has a will for our life and we're able to find it.

And what we find in Daniel, in Daniel, the whole book, but in particular you see it lived out in these six stories in the first six chapters, is you find a model of what it looks like to resolve within your heart, to be made new by the word of God so that you do not conform to a broken culture all around us. So before we read it,

let me pray. Father in heaven, we bow before you and ask that you would give us wisdom as we look into your world, we know our world is broken and in many ways our own lives have a measure of brokenness. And yet we thank you that we find in the scriptures is that you are able to take what looks like ashes and make something beautiful out of them. And so we ask that you would do that today in our lives.

God, I pray that the words of my mouth and the meditations of our heart would be pleasing and acceptable to you, that you would speak through weakness, that you would build up your church, that you would build up your people. And for those who are here who do not have a relationship with Christ, I pray that today would be the day of their salvation when you draw them to yourself. And we pray all of this in Christ's name, amen. Daniel chapter one verse one, "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem and besieged it, and the Lord gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah into his hand with some of the vessels of the house of God."

Now, for those of you who were here last week, on the first week of the series, you know that we looked at the first four verses. We're not going to go into that much depth, but I want to give those, in particular those who are new, some context, what's happening, okay. This invasion, the third year of this man's reign, the king of Judah, the city of Jerusalem is invaded by the empire of Babylon. This was actually happened in 605 BC and it was the first of three invasions that happened over a 20 year period. Now, each of these invasions led to a deportation. And so the first invasion, they come in, they conquer. The king's dad dies. And so he runs home in order to secure his throne. He waits nine years and he comes back to Jerusalem again. He invades it again, conquers it again, comes away.

And then the 10th year after that, 10 more years, he comes back again, invades the city of Jerusalem once again, this time leveling it to the ground. It's buildings, it's temple, it's wall exiling all the rest of the people except for the poorest of the poor who could farm the land. And in each one of these invasions, in each one of these different time periods, there was a deportation of people, three different waves. The first wave that aligned with the first invasion, it was the ruling class. Notice what it says in verse three and four. "Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, youths without blemish of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding, learning and competent to stand in the king's palace and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans." This was the intention. Now, this strategy was remarkably precise and planned.

The strategy in the first wave, 605, they go in and it says that they take the young people, the cultural influencers of the youngest generation. And the strategy was simply this. It was to put the young influencers of tomorrow's generation through a pluralistic liberal arts education in order to reprogram their worldview by teaching them the literature and the language of the Chaldeans in order to convert the masses and assimilate the masses of people in Israel who were going to be coming in the second and the third wave. And so the intention was to take some of the brightest and some of the most influential young people, put them in a school and completely reprogram their worldview. They all came into Babylon having been taught their origin, their purpose, and their destiny was all wrapped around God Almighty. And they wanted to teach them a different

worldview, a different origin of where you come from, a different destiny of what happens when you die, and a different way to live on the basis of the gods or the idols of Babylon.

And they did this not simply to change the minds of some of the royals. It's the royals, they had influence over the masses. So nine years later when they invade a second time, he pulls back and all of a sudden he takes 10,000 people. And the second wave of exiles were from the professional class. These were engineers and architects. They were builders and teachers and educators. They were leaders of people. And then they waited 10 more years and suddenly when it was time to destroy all of Jerusalem, this massive middle class flood into Babylon as refugees. So what I just described about Daniel is this, what we're reading here in Daniel chapter one, the second and third wave haven't even happened yet. He's there just as a young man. He's a teenager. He's been ripped from his family, culture and school that all affirmed and taught a biblical worldview. And now he is a teenage refugee in Babylon, which is today it would be just south of Baghdad. This is Daniel.

And he began asking a question as did his friends. And that is how am I supposed to live and thrive in a culture where all of its institutions are antithetical to my worldview, where all of the institutions, it's okay, I promise, it's just glass. It's okay. We're so glad the little one's here. I'm serious. We'll pick it up afterward. Okay, third service, no one's here next. And so where all the institutions are antithetical to the worldview of the Bible. And for Daniel where he had nowhere to go back to and the reason he had nowhere to go back to is because his home was burned down. Now, this is really important because there's a lot of us who are asking the same thing. We look at America and we look at how American Christians have lost their cultural influence and most of the people are complaining about it or trying to devise strategies to go back. But let me tell you something, welcome to Babylon.

We are here. We don't go back, we go forward. And the way we go forward is the way that these young men are going to teach us and model before us of how do you live in such a way that your life becomes an apologetic of itself, of a better worldview to become a holy people, that we might become a kingdom of a priest, to being able to bring people to Christ where he can change their heart, where the culture can be modified and changed again. And so we read verse five. "The king assigned them a daily portion of the food that the king ate and of the wine that he drank. They were to be educated for three years, and at the end of the time, they were to stand before the king. Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. And the chief of the eunuchs gave them names Daniel he called Belteshazzar. Hananiah he called Shadrach. Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego.

But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food or with the wine that he drank. And therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself. And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the side of the chief of the eunuchs, and this chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, 'I fear my Lord the king who assigned your food and your drink for why should he see that you were in worse condition than the youths who were of your own age? So you would endanger my head with the king.' Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, "Test your servants for 10 days and let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink, and then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's food be observed by you, and deal with

your servants according to what you see.’

So he listened to them in this matter and tested them for 10 days. At the end of 10 days, it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king’s food. So the steward took away their food and the wine that they were to drink and gave them vegetables. As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom. And Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. At the end of the time when the king had commanded that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. And the king spoke with them, and among all of them, none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. Therefore, they stood before the king. And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them 10 times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom. And Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus.”

So as we consider the question, how do we live and thrive in a culture where its institutions are increasingly hostile to our worldview and where we can’t go back, we can only go forward, I want to encourage you to first, and what we’re going to do is not just think first about what are we supposed to do, but first ask the question, who is God and what is he doing in the story? And then begin to align our life and applications to what he’s doing in the story. And this is the hope that we have even today. So the first truth I want you to see about God is that God gives an unshakable identity to those who trust in him.

You know what? You think of something when you think of you. If I were to say, give me five words that you identify who you are, that describe your personhood. If we didn’t know each other and I said, why don’t you tell me just five things, five critically important things about your identity, what you would come up with were those words would not only be important to help me know who you are, they will be prophetic of how you’re going to behave tomorrow. Our identity shapes our behavior. If you think you’re a leader, you lead. If your identity is a victim, you think and behave like a victim. If your identity is a man or a woman, a father, a mother, a parent, a child, a neighbor, a citizen, whatever it is, that’s how you behave.

Well, these Babylonians, they knew that as well. And so the first order of business when they began their school, first day of school to reprogram these young Jewish leaders, they said, you all need a new name. Your name aligns itself with the God of Israel, the God of the Bible, and we want to give you a new name that aligns with our gods. And that’s exactly what they did. Daniel. Daniel means God is my judge. So if you ever see a name in English that’s translated at the end, it’s ell, that’s the word God. El is God. So this is God is my judge. And they gave him a new name. Well, there’s an idol, Bel. They believe that this idol controlled rain and storms, things like this. And so they gave him a new name that it says Bel protect his life. It was an attempt to shape his identity.

Hananiah, anytime you see a name in the Old Testament and it’s iah at the end of it, like Jeremiah, Isaiah, it’s Yahweh, Yahweh’s one of the names of God, the Bible. Yahweh is gracious, that’s what his name meant. That’s what his parents gave him. And they said, we’re going to call you Shadrach, or the command of Aku. So you

see a ach, Aku they believe was the God who controlled the moon. Mishael, it means who is as God is. They gave him Meshach who is what Aku is. And then Azariah means Yahweh will help. They gave him Abednego, he was maybe one of the favorite ones. I'm not certain about this because they gave him the name servant of Nebu. This is the same name, Nebuchadnezzar that he was named after.

And so in each case they gave him a new name. Now, this is really interesting and very important, each one of these young men knowing that what God had said about them was the truest description of their identity and that these new names would not defile their soul and they would not dictate their future directions. They simply trusted God. They did not refuse the name and they received the insult. Now, I want you to think about this. This is really important. See, if you die on every hill you'll live on none of them.

And so you got to pick your priority, and your priority is my relationship with God. You call me whatever you want. And of course we got to remember that all these stories, they don't point us to Daniel, they point us to Jesus. Throughout this entire study, Daniel is going to be in heaven screaming at Providence. I'm not the hero. I'm looking at him though and I'm singing to him along with all of heaven. And you know what they sing? We're told in Revelation five, "Worthy is the lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." He's the hero. But I want you to notice some of the similarities, what Jesus went through when he came to the earth, he had an identity that was unshakable. He was the son of God and son of man. He was the great I am. He was the author of life, the sustainer of life, the judge of life. He was the good shepherd of life. He's the Lord of lords. He's the king of kings.

All of these identities, He acts upon. His own behavior flows out of who He is. In other words, He's a good shepherd to you because He's the good shepherd. Does this make sense? His identity matters and he came to the earth. He came to the earth and one of his identities was the lamb of God. Now, some of you you're like, what does that mean, lamb? Worthy is the lamb like a little sheep running around up there? No, no, no, no. This is Jesus. We're talking about Jesus Christ. You see, when sin came into the world, God looked at sin and He says, you need a savior. And so He promised to sin one day a special son who would come to the earth live without sin and yet die in our place to take our sin from us. But until Christ came, Christ the promised one, the Messiah came, there was a lot of sin happening in the world and they needed a covering. The word in the Bible that talks about covering is the word atonement.

And so if I had something on my hand and we put a bandaid over it, it would cover it. It would atone, but it wouldn't take it away. It would simply be where you can't see it anymore. That's what atonement means, to cover. And so God needed a covering. He said, you know what? You guys are all exposed, you're overwhelmed with guilt, and you have no real certainty within your own heart as to what to do with your sin. And so this is what I'm going to do. I'm going to give you a sacrificial system. I know this sounds weird, but makes sense if you really begin to understand all of its principles. And he says, this is what happens, if you sin you can bring a lamb, a spotless lamb to the temple, to the priest, and the lamb will die in your place and the lamb will be a covering.

It won't take away your sin, it'll cover his sin until the promised one. The lamb of God comes who will live without sin and die for our sin and rise from the dead. And everyone who trust in him, he takes away your sin. He's the lamb of God. This is why they sing to him in heaven, because everyone in heaven knows if you're in heaven, the only reason I'm in heaven is because of the lamb. It's not because of my righteousness. It's his righteousness. It's not because of my morality, it's because of his morality. It's his accomplishment. So we all sing to the lamb, you're going to sing to the lamb forever if you know Christ, if you're in heaven, you're going to love the lamb forever.

It's interesting when the lamb came to the earth, Satan tried to reprogram his loyalty and said, if you'll worship down, meaning you bow out before me, I'll give you the whole world. Not only did they try to reprogram his loyalty, his own disciples tried to reprogram his mission. He says, we're going to Jerusalem. This is going to happen when we get there, I'm going to be killed. Rise from the dead. And Peter takes him aside, he says, you will not, trying to reprogram his mission. His enemies called him terrible names not his real name. They didn't call him bread of life, they called him Blasphemer [inaudible 00:26:11]. They didn't call him son of man, son of God. They called him son of immorality. But Jesus Christ knew who he was, so he lived without sin. He died for ours. He rose from the grave in order to save us. And everyone who puts their faith and trust in him, he forgives us of our sin. He gives us his righteousness and then he gives us a brand new identity.

And if you have never put your faith and trust in Christ, I'm serious, just stop listening to me and start talking to him. Call out to him. The Bible says, whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. You call him and you say, I am a sinner, I can't save myself, but I trust in Christ and I confess him as my Lord. The Bible says, you'll be forgiven. It'll give you a new identity. And for those of us who have a new identity, the application is this. What do we do? How do we live and thrive in a place where all the institutions are antithetical to our worldview? We trust who God says we are. You will be susceptible to chasing a lie your whole life until you begin to open the Bible and learn who you are in Christ. You are created. That's one of your identities. You're endowed with dignity. You're created with intent and purpose.

He tells us that one of our identities is we are fallen, we are sinful, we have a fallen nature. Fallen nature has a corresponding behavior. That is when we agree that our identity is a fallen person, it creates a humility. And people who forget they're fallen, even in the moment, you may know categorically I'm fallen, but when you're arguing with your spouse and you're convinced that you're sovereign, you will willingly destroy everything good around you, important things to you and important things to God in order to get your way. You're fallen. Not only are you fallen, you're loved. God demonstrates his love for us in that while we were still sinning, he died for us. Nothing you can do can separate you from the love of God.

One of your identities it says, is you're forgiven, which means you do not have to hold onto guilt and shame any longer. One of your identities is he says, you are justified, which means that he's given you his righteousness, which means that you can live in confidence because your worst day tomorrow cannot reduce your righteousness before Christ and your best day tomorrow cannot add to your righteousness. Your righteousness is Christ is the same yesterday, today and forevermore. You're adopted. It's one of your identities. You're

in a family, no matter how lonely you are, you have a family. You're a citizen of heaven.

This is not your home and you are a sent one, you are commissioned. You know what happens when you believe you're sent? You go. What does that mean for people who never go at the gospel to their neighborhood or to the nations? They do not believe one of the truest things about them, and that is that God has made them a sent one. Our identity is going to shape our behavior. These are the unshakable realities of a Christian and no amount of name calling from our culture can change this identity, trust what he has said and live from it. Second, God gives resolve to those who fix their eyes on him. The king's food, for whatever reason, created a burden, a conscientious objection within him. Verse eight says that Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food or with the wine that he drank. And the fact is we're not given the reason that the Old Testament tells us that there's a list of foods that the people of Israel were not allowed to eat.

And it says that the people of Israel were not allowed to eat food that was sacrificed to idols. And so perhaps the food that he saw on the table was both on that list and sacrificed to idols. We're not told in the text, but what's amazing about what we are told is this, is that here's a young man who is very, very far from home and he's practicing God's presence. We talk about this frequently here, the importance of practicing God's presence. It means you wake up and when you wake up, whether, and you can't see him physically, you greet him. Good morning, Lord. Thank you for allowing me to wake up and live in your world. And what I want to do today is to walk with you. I want to be able to be sensitive to your promptings. I want to be quick to confess my sin. I want to be quick to obey. You want to turn right? I want to turn right. You want to turn left? I want to turn left.

And here Daniel is all this way away. He's walking with the Lord. He's just practicing his presence and he's utterly convinced that though he is so far away is that God is near, that God is faithful and that God is just. All the way in Babylon, he is right next to me, all the way in Babylon, his words are still true and all the way in Babylon, he's going to hold me accountable to my response to those words. Therefore, verse eight, he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself.

Now, this is amazing to me. Here's Daniel, he's absolutely clear that his resolve wasn't about his health or his diet or his preferences, but about his heart. He goes to the man and says, look, this is not... He didn't say, look man, I just don't like the food. He says, this food is affecting my relationship with God. This food has the capacity to defile. Many of us, many of us, because sometimes it's really hard to be a courageous person like this, when we have a conscientious objection in this capacity. If it was food, we might be inclined to say, well, I don't really want to make them think I'm weird, so I'm not going to say this is going to defile me and it's going to affect my relationship with God. So I'll just say, you know what? I'm vegan. I got a food allergy.

Daniel said, let's just make this very, very clear. What I'm looking in front of me, this may halt my career path, but this will defile me. And that's a problem. Tremendous courage, and it's amazing what he didn't excuse. He didn't excuse duration. There's nothing in here that says, you know what? Here I am. Okay, school's three years and then I heard this thing from Jeremiah said, we're going to be here 70. Man, there's a good chance

that.. Even if I make it 35 years, probably going to say no sometimes, so I might as well say no. So bring on the lobster. No, it's not what he did. He said, it doesn't matter how long I'm going to be here, I'm going to keep saying no.

Some of us cave on our moral principles because we can't imagine saying no that long. He also doesn't excuse the fact of his distance from home. Many in this church and in our city, we take all kinds of business trips and go all over the world. And isn't it true that some people are not only more tempted, but some people act on those temptations in ways that when you're 500 miles from home, you just don't do it when you're at home. And here you, there's nothing in here saying, I'm so far away from home anyway. Mom and dad aren't going to see me. Doesn't matter. He says, no, God will see me.

There's no attempt to punish God for pains that he permitted. Nothing in there, says, God, you let me down. I prayed that I wouldn't be one of these people that went into the first wave of exile and here I am in Babylon. You forsook me. So take this. Some of us are trying to punish God for the pains that he's permitted. We only punish our own heart. And there was no wavering when most of the other exiles ate the food. And I want you to notice that Daniel also, not only did he have this resolve, but he acted on it in such a winsome way. He didn't become some freedom fighter, he didn't picket it at the King's cafe. His protest was polite. He knew that this official bore consequence if he got too skinny, and so he proposed a test. He says, just test your servants 10 days. Why don't you give us vegetables to eat, water to drink and let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's food be observed by you? You can judge.

In other words, Daniel did not expect others to have to suffer for his moral principles. He was utterly winsome in his approach, and God was utterly pleased with his courage, and therefore he received favor and compassion. At the end of the 10 days, it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's food. Now, I'm just going to say this because it's just funny to me. Every time I read this fatter and flesh, the application of this would not be go home to your loved one and say, you know what? I've been looking at you and it is clear that you're a little bit fatter in flesh. That was a compliment for Daniel, but wouldn't be today. Okay. But in all seriousness, how do we live in a culture when its institutions are hostile to a biblical worldview? We talked about identity first and second is this. Let's resolve not to defile our hearts.

His relenting about receiving the name that was an insult, and his resolving about not eating the food were both rightly applied because he knew his Bible. You see, Jesus later clarified that it's not food that defiles our heart, it's what comes from our heart in Matthew 15, but Daniel operating on the truth that he had at that moment in time without the New Testament, he resolved to obey God and to believe and trust him at his word in order to protect his heart. And this is where this is very important. In first Peter chapter two, he says, "Abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul." Sometimes we imagine there's all kinds of things that are afflicting our soul, but this is what he says. He goes, if you feed your soul things that are defiling, you wage war on your own soul.

And many of us our soul, it looks like a battleground. And as a result of that, we come to worship or we come to the word, or we come to a small group and we feel sour and we feel bitter, and we feel far from God and we play the music and we're like, I don't like this song. Let me ask you this question. Are you eating at the king's table? You say, what's on the king's table today? It may be different for each one of us. Some things will be specifically forbidden within scripture, but it would be anything that defiles your heart and that waters down your zeal to love, know, and worship Christ.

For several years, I've been praying for a heightened spirit of worship within our church to blow away the apathy of singing to Christ. And one of the greatest hindrances to that is when we walk in here and our soul is a smoky battlefield, I know nobody, including myself, that can protect my heart at no cost. This is why the apostle Paul says, I take great pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man. If you want to love worship, it will be costly. It will cost. I'm supposed to finish. And so let me get this last point at least on the table, and that is that God honors those who humble themselves before Him.

He humbles those who exalt themselves and he exalts those who humble themselves. And sometimes God's reckoning is very slow. Sometimes we're like, that's an arrogant person. How come you're not doing that right now God? Stop them right now. Stop it right now. And other times, it's absolutely immediate. In this case, it took three years. At the end of the time, three years among all of them, none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. God honored their humble resolve with health, skill and wisdom. And you remember, their calling is just like ours. To be a kingdom of priest and a holy nation, that God's word would create within us, a renewed mind that would transform our life, where people would look at our life and say, man, you're living different. Why? And now suddenly we get to behave like a priest. Well, let me tell you why. Let me point you to Jesus Christ.

Let me encourage you as we close, let's look to Jesus as our only hope. As Christians, we've experienced a loss of social influence and applause of our biblical worldview. And as a result, many Christians are spending all their time either complaining about how things have changed or trying to find a pathway backwards. Providence, I beg you to see that this is our Babylon and it is from this place, while we practice these principles, that God can bring about a revival, not only in our heart, homes and church, but also in our land. You see, only Jesus can change the heart. He came to the earth. He was never defiled. He never sinned. He went to the cross. He rose from the dead. And when people put their faith and trust in him, they receive a new operating system and new desires, new identity, new resolve, and this, and this alone will change our country. So share the gospel that you love. Let's pray.

Father in heaven, we bow before you. Thank you for your kindness to us. I pray, God, that as we seek to now lay our life before you in response to say we want to walk before you, we want to see and experience this will of yours, that's good, it's acceptable, and it's perfect. I pray that you would give clarity to each one of us as to what our next step should be. God, would you help us to grow firm and confident in our unshakeable identity with you. And God, I pray that you would help us to be resolved and courageous to say, I will not defile myself. I will not break my relationship with God in order to be suitable with man. In God we pray that you

would help us to wait upon your honor, to lift us up in due time, even if we have to wait a long time. And so we look to you, Jesus, as our one and only hope. We sing to you now and we pray all of this in Christ's name. Amen.

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