

“THE ALTERNATIVE OF THE GODLY”

DANIEL 1:8-16

Theme: God honors the believer who will be faithful to Him by responding with faithfulness.

I. The Purpose to Avoid Defilement -1:8

A. *THE DECISION NOT TO BE DEFILED*

1. In response to the pressure that Daniel was facing to abandon his devotion to the Lord God, he faced three specific attacks:
 - a) The indoctrination of pagan thought and philosophy.
 - b) The identification of pagan names.
 - c) The Ingestion of pagan foods.
2. The first two of these did not involve standards of his conscience – he was not concerned about the orientation to error or about what he was called by unregenerate men.
3. However, to eat of the *“king’s choice food”* and *“the wine which he drank,”* would be a direct act of disobedience to the commandment of God – cp. [Exodus 34:14-15](#).
4. In addition, there were strict dietary laws concerning how food was to be prepared – (not strangled as the pagan custom was) – that were no doubt a great sense of abhorrence to the righteous Hebrew.
5. Daniel saw that if he cooperated, he would both be spiritually defiled as well as giving recognition to a false god thereby blowing his opportunity to give “testimony” to the real God of men.
6. Therefore, he *“made up his mind that he would not defile himself”*
 - a) *“made up his mind”* – literally means “take it to heart” or “give thought to it” – emphasizing the contemplation of God that produces an action – cp. [Isaiah 57:11](#).
 - b) *“defile himself”* – literally means “pollute or stain” oneself – that is, having considered God, he refused to put a blot on himself because of his reverence for God.
7. This decision demonstrates that Daniel comprehended that it was because of the failure to observe the Law that Judah was in the straights they were facing – cp. [1 Corinthians 10:18-20](#).

B. *THE DIFFICULTY OF THE DECISION*

1. **Peer Pressure** – all the other “sons of Israel” who were brought to Babylon were obviously doing it – at first, Daniel alone refuses and is ultimately joined by his three friends: Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.
2. **Intimidation** – of the King’s absolute power – to defy him would be in incur certain wrath and possibly execution.
3. **Ambition** – to refuse would spoil all chances of advancement toward the goal of a fine government position at the close of the training period.
4. **Pleasure** – it was the best food available, very enticing to be sure.
5. **Anonymity** – they were nowhere near where the elders of Israel or even their parents could “catch them” or even know what they’d done.
6. **Accountability** – *“so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself”* – he explained his request for privilege which would have involved explaining the nature of the defilement and why – speaking of the one true God, Yahweh.

II. The Probation of Dedication - 1:9-13

A. *THE PERIL OF DEVOTION* - vv. 9-10

1. It is true that standing up and remaining loyal to God is at times perilous.
2. However, lest we be dissuaded, God give us a glimpse of what we are not able to observe – His sovereign work on our behalf – a work we would never know if we were not being faithful.
3. *“Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials.”* –
 - a) *“favor”* – indicates an unfailing love that is expressed through acts of kindness and special good will.
 - b) *“compassion”* – literally refers to “bowels” and involves a “tender love” from deep within.
4. This all demonstrates that God was working to protect Daniel by giving him a special place in the heart of the *“commander of the officials.”*
5. However, the commander – Ashpenaz – was afraid of the King’s wrath that would result in his death if the King discovered what had been done.
6. Apparently, Daniel had already “stuck out” as unusual so that he’d

likely be regularly eyed by the King.

7. However, instead of simply refusing the request, the work of God in Ashpenaz resulted in his giving an explanation to Daniel – opening the door for further creativity.
8. Notice the natural response of this man compared to the response of Daniel's commitment to uprightness ... which are we more commonly like?

B. *THE PROBING OF DEVOTION - vv. 11-13*

1. Possibly, Ashpenaz had given a small indication that whereas he would not endanger himself, Daniel might try a subordinate, an *“overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.”*
2. Possibly the reason these boys – all of whom protested – were placed in the care of this *“overseer”* was that he might not be involved in the “evaluation” or “experiment” regarding their diet.
3. Daniel proposes a *“test ... for ten days”* – a brief amount of time for one's diet to make a conclusive distinction – thus, serving as an opportunity for God to show His power on their behalf.
4. After eating *“vegetables ... and water to drink. 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.”*
5. Thus, Daniel had confidence in God's ability to honor their obedience to His Word.

III. The Proof of God's Dominion - 1:14-16

A. *THE PREMINENCE OF GOD'S SERVANTS - vv. 14-15*

1. God demonstrated His favor on the four Hebrews by causing their ten day test to result in an incredible tribute to His power and grace.
2. First, the overseer agreed to the test: *“So he listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days.”*
3. In addition, when the test was completed, *“their appearance seemed better, and they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating the King's choice food.”*
4. “God's direct intervention would have been necessary to affect this manner of observable change in so short a period – truly a

demonstration of God's faithfulness to those who do His will."¹

B. ***THE PRIVILEGES OF GOD'S SERVANTS - v. 16***

1. As a result of their faithfulness and willingness to "take a stand" for righteousness, God secured for them the honor of continued purity.
2. *"The overseer continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables."* –
3. A firm commitment to what is right is not legalism, it is obedience.
4. It appears that Ashpenaz continued to grant the exemption from the King's food – likely on a day-to-day basis, with the prerogative of rescind their privileges is he noticed any change for the worse.
5. This would indicate that God continued to sustain His blessing upon them.
6. Today, with all the rationalizing, relativism, pragmatism, subjectivism, and the rejection of absolutes, we need people who are committed to the absolute authority of God's Word, who are unwilling to compromise to become the friends of the world.

¹ Leon Wood, A Commentary on Daniel, p. 42.