

Fearless
No Compromise
Daniel 1:1-21

February 23, 2020 pm

HDBC

Tonight we begin a journey through one of the most intriguing books of the Bible. It is to the O.T. what the Revelation is to the N.T. In fact, the two have some things in common. We'll see some of that as we work our way through. **The book of Daniel is like a swimming pool. It has a shallow end and a deep end. Thankfully we can ease into the shallow end with the first chapter or two before we start having to tread water. Unfortunately the shallow and deep ends are not clearly defined. Rather than being on opposite ends, they are mixed in.**

The book is named after the primary character and writer, Daniel. Ordinary man who lived on the razor's edge. He learned very early in his life that faith in God was the most important thing in life. His life story seems to move from one exciting episode to another. Few characters in the Bible faced the kinds of temptations that this man faced. His life was anything but boring.

Time and time again he was faced with the pressure of a value system which was diametrically opposed to his own. And time and time again he made choices which enabled him to stay pure. Consider four things in this first chapter.

1. The dangers he faced (1-7)

The book opens with the mention of the fall of Jerusalem into the hands of the King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar. Notice verse two: ***the Lord gave Jehoiakim . . . into his hand. . . .*** The book of Daniel is all about the sovereignty of God over the nations. God is in control not only of those who serve Him, but also of those who do not.

Judgment has now come upon Judah because of their refusal to be obedient to the Lord. The judgment came in the form of destruction and captivity. Once the city fell, the Babylonians began to deport many of the Jews back to Babylon. This was the first of three major deportations.

Daniel and three of his friends were taken in this group. Most believe he was a teenager at the time. Verse 4 tells that there were some strict qualifications. **Young. Healthy. Handsome. Intelligent.. Discerning.** The purpose was to bring them in for service in the king's court.

Why would these young men, who had been physically and forcefully taken from their homes, be willing to serve the enemy king? Nebuchadnezzar had a great plan. He would change everything about them. He would brainwash them. Once he finished with them they would be loyal. Notice the steps that would be used in this process.

A. Change their way of thinking (4-5)

Force these young men to give up their native tongue. They would be forced to learn a new language and be taught the literature of their new nation. It was an attempt to change their entire worldview into one that was completely antithetical to what they had been born into. In this new culture they would be expected to learn **the art of divination, involving the ability to interpret the signs in the stars and to be able to receive messages from examining the livers of slaughtered sheep.**

They would be subjected to a rigorous three year program of study. While their minds were young and impressionable, they would reshape them. **The Goal: Change the way they think!**

Our children are being faced with these same kinds of pressure in the schools, on the playground, on the ball fields and courts, in gymnastic teams and dance teams. University students will be especially bombarded with a worldview that is opposite of what the Bible teaches. The pressure will be strong and unrelenting. Our children and students need to be exposed to the example of Daniel

But it is not only our children who will be in danger of this kind of pressure. We feel it as well. In the work place, with our neighbors and in the marketplace we are constantly being pressured to give up the truths that we hold sacred because they come from God's word.

B. Change the level of their commitment (5)

This was interesting. They were to be given the same diet as the king. They would eat like the king. They would be given the best food in the land. Clearly, it was not the goal of the king for force them into submission, but **to lure them** into submission. They would eat much better than they ever had before. They would be indebted to the king.

More than this, it would cause them to violate some of the key principles and laws that they were committed to. There were at least two problems with eating this diet.

1) Some of the food was ceremonially unclean

Note the word *defile* in verse 8. It denotes religious defilement. There were certain kinds of meat that were forbidden by law.

2) The meat had been offered to idols

History of this culture makes it clear that animals would be sacrificed to the gods they worshipped. Some would be consumed on these pagan altars. What was not consumed would be taken to the palace to be eaten by the king and his family. To Daniel and his friends, this would be a great violation of their commitment to God.

The Goal: lower the level of their commitment (small compromises)

C. Change their worship (7)

The change in names was one way of trying to force the young men to break completely with their past. This was to be a new beginning.

These young men had been given names reflective of the religion of Judah. They had Hebrew names, which reminded them that they worshiped the one true God. **Daniel** means “God is my judge.” Every time he heard or said his name it was a reminder of His God.

The new names were Babylonian names. Names reflective of the polytheism of the Babylonians. **The Goal: Change their worship.**

So, Daniel and his friends faced at least three dangers in this foreign culture. **Their thoughts, worship, lifestyle.** Once those things begin to be compromised it would be difficult to maintain their purity and holiness. We face the same dangers in our culture. Attempts to influence the way we think, worship and live.

2. **The decision he made (8a)**

In the midst of those dangers and pressures, Daniel made an important decision. He would not defile himself with the king's food. There is no hint that Daniel ever complained about the deportation and captivity. Nothing said about the language, education or name change. But it was at the point of eating the king's food that he drew a line. **Daniel knew where to draw the line.** He knew where to say *no*.

His objection was not just a teenage whim. It was based on sound convictions. How could someone so young have such discernment and conviction? As a young boy he lived during the reign of King Josiah, who was a vigorous reformer. Josiah worked hard to undo the ungodly years of his predecessors. This resulted in a national revival that was short-lived, but likely made a deep impression on Daniel.

Also Daniel was likely the product of a godly home. Clearly he had a great knowledge of the things of God. This would be a reflection of his parents. No way to fully measure the importance of a Godly home. I think it is clear that Daniel had already made up his mind before the temptation was ever offered. He knew the answer before the question was asked. He had already made a life commitment to purity and righteousness. He knew God's word and was determined to follow it.

3. **The wisdom he demonstrated (8b-16)**

Daniel then did an interesting thing. He did not compromise his convictions. But neither did he rebel against the authorities in his life. He offered a solution which could be acceptable to both parties. May be a great principle for us, when we find ourselves at odds with our authorities. We often think that our only options are total defiance or complete submission in violation of our convictions. Sometimes there may be other solutions. Daniel was a sharp thinker.

A. Asked Permission (8b-10)

Rather than simply violating his convictions, or acting in open defiance, he asked permission to be excused. The king's chief of staff hesitated because he was afraid he would lose his life. Daniel did not stop. He offered a substitute plan.

B. Offered a Solution (11-13)

Let him and his friends eat vegetables and drink water for ten days. Then compare our looks with the others. Simple plan. No one would have to be hurt. The chief of staff was willing to give it a try.

C. Experienced Success (14-16)

Daniel believed that in only ten days God could make it very clear that His plan was best. And this is what happened. There was a remarkable difference. It was obvious. So, they were allowed to follow that diet, thus avoiding anything that would ceremonially defile them.

4. The success he enjoyed (17-21)

God blessed the faith and courage of these young men. Blessed them with knowledge and intelligence. Daniel was even given ability to understand dreams. Something that would be very helpful in the future.

Keep in mind that these guys were immersed in a very corrupt culture. It was spiritually bankrupt and morally lacking. It was a violent society in which human life was given very little worth. How was he able to remain true?

1- Daniel remembered who he was.

He was a child of God. He never forgot his basic nature and allegiance. He knew that his citizenship was not on this earth, but in Heaven.

2- Daniel recognized the dangers.

He knew that the culture around him could and would corrupt him if he let it. He failed to fall into the trap of assuming that there was no danger.

3- Daniel took steps to protect himself.

He saw the danger ahead of time and made decisions beforehand. He never lost perspective. He knew where to draw the line.