

Living for the Lord in a Pagan Society

Daniel 1

Part 4

Introduction: Last week in our study we looked at the captives who were taken in the first deportation, namely Daniel and his friends. They were the very best of Judah. They were very intelligent, good-looking, and young.

Notice Daniel 1:3-5

The plan by the Nebuchadnezzar was to completely brainwash these young men to make them Chaldeans. They desired that these men forget who they were as Jews. Therefore, they gathered them to Babylon, and they poured into them the ways of the Babylonians. Behind this was also the desire to cause the Jews left after the first deportation to feel deflated. They also changed the names of these young men in an attempt to cause them to forget Jehovah.

Notice Daniel 1:6-7

The information below helps us to see what Nebuchadnezzar was doing.

Daniel - "God is my judge" > **Belteshazzar** = "Bel Protect the King."

Hananiah - "Jehovah is Gracious" > **Shadrach** = "Command of Aku (Babylonian idolatrous god)."

Mishael - "Who is like God?" > **Meshach** = "Who is what Aku Is?"

Azariah - "Jehovah is my Helper" > **Abed-nego** = "Servant of Nego (Babylonian idolatrous god)" also called Nebo, a god of vegetation.

Daniel and his friends did not object to the names because they understood that the Babylonian names did not affect the heart. But Daniel did see a need to take a stand against the King's food.

Notice Daniel 1:8

Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the King's food. Last week we considered why he took this stand, and I believe it was for several reasons.

1. **Preparation** - Under the Levitical Law the Jews could eat no blood or fat, and the animals had to be prepared in a certain way. Daniel would not allow himself to be defiled with this meat. It was a serious offense to eat the blood of an animal.

Leviticus 3:17

¹⁷ It shall be a perpetual statute for your generations throughout all your dwellings, that ye eat neither fat nor blood.

Leviticus 17:10

¹⁰ And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people.

There are teachers who do not believe that this is the reason why Daniel refused the food. They say that Daniel had to take a stand somewhere and this just happened to be the stand that he had taken. But I say that the word "defile" in verse 8 makes it clear that Daniel stood at this time because there was the possibility of being defiled and that could only be there food that was not kosher.

2. **Idols** - There is also the possibility that the food was offered to idols, namely to the gods of the Babylonians. This was forbidden by God to the nation of Israel.

Exodus 34:12-15

¹² Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee:

¹³ But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves:

¹⁴ For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God:

¹⁵ Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice;

Getting back to our text, Daniel had purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the King's meat. But how would he reject the meat and still survive? This choice was as offensive to the king as Daniel's 3 friends, not bowing to the golden image.

➤ The Sovereignty of God

Notice Daniel 1:9

Here in this verse, we see God at work on behalf of Daniel and his friends. Daniel had found favor with the prince of the eunuchs. We read something similar in the life of Joseph.

Genesis 39:1-4

And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither.

² *And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.*

³ *And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.*

⁴ *And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.*

There is a verse in Proverbs that shines spiritual light on both of these situations.

Proverbs 16:7

⁷ *When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.*

Both Daniel and Joseph's ways pleased the Lord, therefore they found favor with those who were over them.

Application:

There is a lesson here that is easily missed if we are not careful. Joseph, Daniel and Daniel's friends believed if they stood on the Truth that God would somehow work in the situation to glorify Himself. This is not the way in which many in the body of Jesus Christ operate today. Today we see believers searching to find ways to influence the unsaved through compromise. In other words, we do not see believers taking a stand to give God an opportunity to change a situation or another person, but instead we see believers compromising the Truth trying to get someone to change. We see this in marriages where there are unequal yokes. A saved person knows that they are to marry another saved

person, but they fall in love with an unbeliever, and they compromise in hopes of seeing the unbeliever come to Jesus Christ. But that hardly ever happens and instead the unbeliever pulls the believer away from the Lord. The believer almost always ends up compromising much more in an attempt to please the unbelieving spouse. We also see this when believers compromise just so they can fit in with a certain group of people.

1 Corinthians 16:13

¹³ Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

Hebrews 10:22-23

²² Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

²³ Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)

How did Daniel and his friends get the faith to take this stand? They believed in the sovereignty of God. They believed He had placed them where they were in Babylon and He could move hearts and change situations when He desired. Their responsibility was just to remain faithful and allow God to work.

Notice Daniel 1:10-13

Let us not miss how Daniel handled this situation. He did not use the Old Testament Law in an attempt to escape the defiling diet. Instead, he proposed a trial period that was fair to Melzar and at the same time it would allow God to work His power in the life of Daniel and his friends. Daniel requested vegetables and grains and water for his food. These would have been food and drink that were not offered to idols.

Let me just add here that in this text God is not giving us a diet that we are to follow. Some churches have seen this and they have adopted a diet of vegetables and grains. One such church was the Saddleback Church led by Rick Warren and they developed the Daniel Diet. If you desire to eat vegetables and grains that is your choice but that is not what we are being taught here. This is about taking a stand and living out our convictions.

Notice Daniel 1:12 again.

I want you to notice something here that is very important when it comes to taking a stand. Daniel had friends that were of the same conviction. This again shows the importance of being in close fellowship with other believers.

Hebrews 10:24-25

²⁴ And let us consider (observe) one another to provoke (encourage to do good) unto love and to good works:

²⁵ Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting (instructing) one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Notice Daniel 1:14-16

In 10 days, God worked in a way to make Daniel and his friends healthier. They gave God a chance and God proved He was working for them.

Application:

I am convinced that few see this power and hand of God today because they do not give God the opportunity. This was God's plan through Daniel and his friends and that was that He/God would be glorified in a pagan environment through His people.

This is exactly what God desires to do through our lives today. But it is on us to give Him the opportunity as we walk by faith. Daniel was a role model of what Israel was to be and he is a role model as to what we are to be. This is not all that the Lord did to be glorified.

Notice Daniel 1:17-20

As we read this it makes me wonder what we have missed in our lives because of compromise or because of fear when we could have taken a stand, but we allowed the opportunity to get away. When I read this and I see that God changed Daniel and his friends in a noticeable way. I then must wonder how many lives God could have changed if His church would take a stand as Daniel did? I do not mean our lives though that could also happen, but I am thinking about the lives of our family members and friends if only we would be strong in the power of His might.

Notice Daniel 1:21

Daniel would continue for approximately 70 years in this foreign land. This first stand that allowed him to see the hand of God would give him courage to take the next stand and so on.

Conclusion:

Consider a few lessons from Daniel 1.

1. It is possible to live a Godly life in the midst of a pagan society.
2. Build a foundation upon the Bible for strength in the trials of life. (This was where Daniel's strength came from.)
3. Trust in the sovereignty of God. (He had allowed Daniel to be in Babylon for a purpose.)
4. God often works through difficult situations.
5. Give God an opportunity to show His power.
6. We are witnesses wherever He places us.