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Sermon Notes

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## **The Courage and Consequences of an Uncompromising Life**

### **Daniel 1**

Illus. Whitewater rafting... strong current, fell out, struggled to get back in

I. “Compromise is the language of the devil...” [and it seems we’re fluent]

- A. Constant force for evil: the world, surrounding culture
- B. Evangelical Christians scarcely different from the world
- C. Christ’s challenge: “If the salt loses its saltiness, what good is it?”
- D. Daniel’s example: Uncompromising values coupled with a sweet and congenial spirit

II. Context of Daniel 1

- A. Israel’s history
  - 1. The Law of Moses
  - 2. The Prophetic warnings
  - 3. The cycles of rebellion
  - 4. The final straw: Manasseh’s sacrifices, Judah’s unrepentance
- B. Nebuchadnezzar’s conquest (vs. 1-2)
  - 1. Father Nebopolassar: roused himself from Chaldees, began to conquer ancient Assyrian territory
  - 2. Son Nebuchadnezzar sent out as a commander of the armies of Babylon
  - 3. Defeated Pharaoh at battle of Carchemish... turned his sites on Jerusalem
- C. Jerusalem’s Fall, Judah’s exile

1. Taken from the Promised land to the most idolatrous nation on earth: Shinar = Babylonia
  - a. established by mighty Nimrod the hunter in Genesis 10
  - b. the site of the Tower of Babel
2. Among the exiles: members of the Judean noble family, including Daniel
3. Also taken: vessels from the temple of God
  - a. “temple of God” a clear allusion to God as the true God
  - b. vessels taken to “the temple of his god”... false god Marduk

D. Bleak situation in Israel’s history: God’s Zeal for His Holy Name

***Joel 2:32 “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”***

***Malachi 1:11, 14 My name will be great among the nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to my name, because my name will be great among the nations," says the LORD Almighty....For I am a great king," says the LORD Almighty, "and my name is to be feared among the nations.***

***Ezekiel 36:19-23 I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes.***

### III. Four Uncompromising Jewish Youths Introduced (vs. 3-7)

A. Nebuchadnezzar’s Goal: Skilled Subservient Counselors (vs. 3-4)

1. Strategy first introduced by the Assyrians... exile, inculturation
2. Employed, enhanced by Nebuchadnezzar
3. Goal: Skilled Subservient Counselors
  - a. every king needs wise counselors... no one sees everything that must be seen
  - b. Nebuchadnezzar’s empire a multi-national grouping
  - c. need culturally-sensitive officials

d. BUT they had to be Babylonian first, Jewish second

## B. Nebuchadnezzar's Strategy: Babylonian Assimilation

1. Get 'em young!! [Maybe as young as 13-14 years old]
  - a. communist rules about teaching religion to children
  - b. modern liberal educators want to train your children very early... values inculturation
  - c. patterns set very early... usually remain in place for whole of life
2. Choose the best
  - a. "royal blood"
  - b. healthy bodies, sound minds
  - c. emphasis on intelligence
3. Teach them Babylonian language and wisdom
  - a. Babylonian language: essential for service in the court; also shapes their thinking
  - b. Babylonian literature: also essential for service, also shapes the thinking
  - c. Babylonian knowledge: science, military, agricultural... excellencies of Babylonian culture... overwhelming superiority would destroy all parochial loyalties
4. Get them used to the good life
 

luxurious food   ample quantities of the best wine   the biggest intoxicant of all: access to the King and all His power
5. Change their names
  - a. name a strong connection to ancestral identity
  - b. name change a strong sense that everything is new
  - c. authority to name also authority in life
6. Convert them to Babylonian religion
  - a. previous names were spiritually illuminating: tied to the God of Israel

- i) Daniel = “God is judge” or “my judge is God”
- ii) Hananiah = “Jehovah is gracious”
- iii) Mishael = “who is he that is God?” or “Who is what God is?”
- iv) Azariah = “Jehovah has helped”

b. so also these new names: tied to the gods of Babylon

- i) Belteshazzar = “May Bel protect his life” [Bel = Baal, chief god of Canaanites]
- ii) Shadrach = “command of Aku” [Aku is the Babylonian moon-god]
- iii) Meshach = “who is what Aku is?”

Note: competition (like Elijah & Baal worshippers) “Who is what God is” vs. “Who is what Aku is?”

- iv) Abed-nego = “servant of Nebo” [Nebo son of Babylonian god Bel]

c. also, food and wine from table had spiritual purpose, as we shall see

Summary: powerful forces for change and compromise: young men, far from home, torn from family, treated kindly by conquerors and given a bright future of service in the empire; given the best of foods and finest of wines; given also the best Babylonian education; names changed, religion changed

Who can stand against such a whitewater current?

C. God’s Heroes: Four Jewish Youth

1. God’s grace raises up courageous heroes
2. This is no accident... Jewish culture must continue until the Messiah comes
3. God raises up heroes of the faith, shapes their character, puts them in key positions, sustains them against all attack, brings forth fruit from their lives

#### IV. Daniel’s Uncompromising Example: Values Tested and Triumphant (vs. 8-17)

A. Daniel’s resolution (vs. 8)

**vs. 8 *But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.***

1. Strong determination based on God’s word

- a. Hebrew = “laid upon his heart”
- b. knew God’s commands, passion after God’s character
- 2. Impossible to resist white-water with wishy-washy resolutions
- 3. Strength of determination directly related to strength of love for God

***John 14:15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command.***

B. Daniel’s reasons

- 1. Unclean meats... contrary to God’s Law
- 2. Food and wine offered to idols

***1 Corinthians 10:20 "...the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons."***

- 3. Behind every idolatrous worship feast is a demonic presence that is real

C. Daniel’s gentle, firm manner... powerful yet winsome (vs. 8)

- 1. Works with tact within existing structure
- 2. Builds relationship
- 3. Some have burning zeal with no tact... leave a wake of destroyed relationships

***Romans 12:18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.***

- 4. This “speaking the truth in love” would serve Daniel beautifully in his later trials
- 5. Daniel genuinely loved some of the Babylonian officials... God would use this in both Nebuchadnezzar’s life and that of Darius the Mede as well
- 6. But as much as he loved Babylonians, he loved God more

D. God’s Gracious Orchestration (vs. 9)

***vs. 9 Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel***

- 1. That there was a Daniel at all... God created and formed Daniel’s heart

Easy to honor Daniel too much... it was still God who made him what he was

2. Friendship with the officials

- a. very similar to Joseph
- b. God controls people's hearts!!
- c. if he wants you to have a strategic friendship for Christ you will!

E. The Obstacle: the King's expectations (vs. 10)

**vs. 10** *but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you."*

1. Chief official charged with a responsibility
2. Life was cheap in Babylon... his head could be on the chopping block!
3. The greater the obstacle, the more God can be glorified

E. The Test Proposed, Accepted and Passed (vs. 11-16)

**vs. 11-13** *Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, <sup>12</sup> "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. <sup>13</sup> Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see."*

1. Led by the Spirit
  - a. Calvin's observation: the idea came from God's Spirit, or else Daniel would have been acting rashly
  - b. Daniel was constantly submissive to the Spirit's leading... this was not his boldness!

**John Calvin:** *[God led Daniel to this: "Test us for ten days!!"]*

Hence let us notice how Daniel had not undertaken or approached the present business with any foolish zeal; and did not speak without due consideration, but was assured of the event by the Spirit of God.

2. The test proposed by Daniel to the friends... Daniel is a leader!! (vs. 11)
3. The test proposed to the guard (vs. 12)

- a. not to the chief official: again, Daniel's wisdom
- b. "Let's just try it out"... you'll see a big difference between us
- c. what was the test? Vegetables and water only... [word means anything that grows from the ground]

4. The guard accepts the test (vs. 14)

**vs. 14** *So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.*

- a. some guards would barely give them the time of day
- b. God had insured a good outcome by His sovereign control over guards

5. God honors Daniel's faith... the test is successful (vs. 15)

**vs. 15** *At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food.*

- a. natural outcome... the vegetable diet was certainly better for the young men
- b. supernaturally quick results... ten days!!
- c. Daniel and his friends now freed from addiction to luxury

6. Permanent change in diet... God has gained the upper hand (vs. 16)

**vs. 16** *So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.*

F. God's Gracious Rewards: Strategic gifts endowed (vs. 17)

**vs. 17** *To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.*

1. All four: Blessed with intelligence and academic success

God gives these gifts... seek Him for insight and He gives it!

2. Daniel: visions and dreams of all kinds... his own and others'

The lasting power of Daniel: supernaturally accurate predictive prophecy through visions and dreams

## V. Uncompromising Servants: Strategically Positioned for God (vs. 18-21)

### A. Nebuchadnezzar's Assessment (vs. 18-20)

1. "Coming out" for service... "Graduation time!!" Three years of training are over
2. King Nebuchadnezzar: brilliant mind, powerful leader
3. Knew immediately these four young men were unique
4. Assessment: "Ten times better" (lit. "Ten hands better")

### B. God's Strategic Planning

1. God's chosen servants once again prepared... just like Joseph
2. God will use them to affect the course of history... because they were holy
3. God lavished intellectual and administrative gifts for His own glory and purposes

### C. God's Patient Timing

1. YET they were not immediately welcomed to highest levels of power
2. That would come with the events of Daniel 2
3. God's timing is not ours... if God has put special gifts in you, He will use each and every one of them IN HIS TIME... if we purify ourselves from defilement

### D. Daniel's Endurance by God's Sustaining Grace (vs. 21)

#### ***vs. 21 And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.***

1. Whole life of service in Babylon stretched ahead of Daniel
2. King Cyrus of Persia the key King under whom Jewish would return to Israel
3. Total length of time: 602 B.C. to 536 B.C = 65 years
4. God put Daniel in position and used him for sixty-five years

## VI. Applications

### A. God's Sovereign Grace

1. God is the powerful actor here... don't be so enamored with Daniel that you lose the centrality of God's sovereign grace

- God raised Daniel up and made him a hero
- God gave Daniel his courage and uncompromising convictions
- God gave Daniel his wisdom and intelligence
- God gave Daniel his winsome personality
- God gave Daniel friendship with key Babylonian leaders
- God gave Daniel three godly friends among the Jewish exiles
- God gave Daniel the idea of the ten day test
- God gave Daniel conspicuous success at the end of the ten days
- God gave Daniel and his friends special intellectual gifts for service in Babylon
- God gave Daniel supernatural wisdom and insight into dreams and visions

2. Therefore, if you want to be a Daniel, look to God to do it in you... BE A SPIRITUAL BEGGAR!!

#### B. A Word to Youth

1. Daniel & Friends: teenagers
2. Peer pressure, cultural pressures strong then as now
3. Youth did amazing things for God
4. Be warriors for Christ! Live openly for Him against all worldly passions

#### C. Daniel's Uncompromising Leadership

1. Daniel sought to be an influencer... he reached out to Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah
  - a. This would help him in chapter two when they prayed with him
  - b. They would shine in chapter three when they were thrown into the furnace
  - c. Daniel's leadership was key to their development, however
2. Who do you influence for Christ? Are you mentoring anyone in the faith? Are you making disciples for Christ?
4. Daniel didn't have to go it alone... God rarely asks us to stand alone

5. Who do you rely upon Do you have a Godly circle of friends that helps you stand firm for Christ?

D. Well-balanced lives: “In the world, but not of it...”

1. Twin dangers
  - a. full immersion resulting in corruption
  - b. full withdrawal resulting in no impact

Either way, we are no longer the salt of the earth or the light of the world

2. God used Daniel’s intellectual gifts for His own glory
  - a. every power was consecrated to God’s service and to His glory
  - b. Daniel never hid his brilliance, but realized God gave it to him for a purpose
3. Daniel was worldly wise in all the ways of Babylon... and he was better at it than any of their own wise men!

Illus: Just like Moses, educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; and like Paul, with his Roman citizenship, his Greek language skills, and His intensive Pharasaic training under Gamaliel... God uses worldly training and education to get His key servants into strategic positions for His glory

4. YET that education and that power never polluted his mind
  - a. it’s hard to imagine a more godless education than Daniel got
  - b. modern universities also teach godless philosophies
  - c. it’s so easy to get swept along and abandon your faith... Daniel never did
5. Daniel’s full immersion in Babylonian life COUPLED WITH his impeccable holiness is the most powerful legacy of example he left to us

O for a generation of Daniel’s to be salt and light in the pagan corridors of power in America and around the world!!

- E. Crying need of our own day... not separatism but uncompromising courage under God’s grace
1. Priority on love for God as demonstrated by total obedience and personal holiness

2. Willingness to forego luxuries as shown by a simple lifestyle
  3. Strong leadership affecting the lives of other believers
  4. Winsomeness in dealing with pagans, resulting in a powerful impact on their lives
- F. Faithful in little, faithful in much: Ever-increasing fruitfulness
1. Daniel had a key test early in his life... he passed with flying colors
  2. God then endowed him with even greater capacity for fruitfulness
  3. Ever-upward cycle... obedience produces small fruit, God responds with increased gifts/opportunity for even more fruitfulness
  4. Are you being faithful where you're planted now??
    - a. faithful in personal holiness and godliness?
    - b. faithful in the use of your spiritual gifts?
    - c. faithful to the daily opportunities God gives you?

***Luke 16:10 "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much."***

Around us every day is the overwhelming force of a whitewater current... the world and its allurements pulling you from God. Have you made the resolution that Daniel made, not to be enticed and polluted by the world? No weak-willed commitment is sufficient!! In the words of the hymn, "Dare to be a Daniel!!"