Pure Living in a Pagan Land

(The Convictions of Daniel)

Daniel 1:1-21

2-28-2021

INTRODUCTION: Verses 1-4

***We need to purpose in our hearts not to bend on our Bible convictions (v. 8).**



I. Obedience Will Always be <u>TESTED</u> (v. 5-7)
(The <u>Test</u> of Daniel's Convictions)

II. Obedience Should Always be <u>GRACIOUS</u> (v. 8b-9)
(The <u>Attitude</u> of Daniel's Convictions)

III. Obedience Will Always Require <u>FAITH</u> (v. 10-14)
(The <u>Faith</u> of Daniel's Convictions)

IV. Obedience Will Always be <u>REWARDED</u> (v. 9, 15-21)
(The <u>REWARD</u> of Daniel's Convictions)

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V. 1

"In the third year of . . . Jehoiakim" = 605 B.C.

Babylon conquered Israel in 3 stages.

1) 605 B.C. - First deportation
--Israel's nobility (including Daniel, etc.)

[Note: The 70 years of captivity prophesied by Jeremiah (Jer. 25:11) lasted from 605 B.C. - 536 B.C.]

2) 597 B.C. - Second deportation

3) 586 B.C. - Jerusalem and Temple destroyed

"Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon" - His father Nabopollaser as still king at this time. Hence, this is a "proleptic" statement.

V. 2

"The Lord gave . . . into his hand" -

The theme of the book of Daniel = *God is sovereign over the history of nations (R.D. Wilson, ISBE, Vol. II, p. 784)

Nebuchadnezzar did not conquer because of his military might and genius, but to fulfill the will of the sovereign God of the universe (cp. Dan. 4:25).

Note: God uses Nebuchadnezzar to accomplish His purpose. Hence, He calls Neb. His "servant" (Jer. 25:9, 27:6, 43:10; cp. God's prophetic reference to Cyrus - as God's "shepherd" - Is. 44:28)

God's sovereignty is evident in the Book of Daniel by:
1. His Miracles (ch. 1-6)
2. His Prophecies (ch. 7-12)

God allowed israel to be taken captive because of her sin.

Jer. 1:16 - The sin of idolatry
2:32 - The sin of forgetting God
3:20 - spiritual adultery
4:22 - willful ignorance
5:30,31 - loving false teachers
6:10 - hating the Word of God
7:10,11 - polluting the Temple

God had warned Israel of impending judgment, but to no avail.

Jer. 4:5-7 - The imminency of God's judgment
5:6 - The fierceness of God's judgment
6:9 - The completeness of God's judgment
8:13 - The certainty of God's judgment

"The vessels of the house of God" - the worship vessels belonging to the Temple. By acquiring the vessels of a Temple, pagans like Nebuchadnezzar would think that his gods gave him victory over the defeated people's God. [i.e. he thought it was proof that his god was stronger] (I Ki. 7:48-51; II Ki. 24:13; Dan. 5:1-3).

"The land of Shinar" = Babylonia (Gen. 10:10; 11:2). Present day Iraq.

NOTE: The requirements or qualifications of the teens chosen (v. 3-4):

1. Family requirements - [Royal (noble) blood]
   "Children" = teenagers (between 13-15 years old)

2. Physical requirements

   a. "No blemish" - no defect, deformity, handicap
   b. "Well favored" - good looking, handsome, pleasing in appearance

3. Intellectual requirements

   a. "Skilful in all wisdom" - intelligent
   b. "Cunning in knowledge" - quick minds
   c. "Understanding science" - good education

4. Personality requirements

   "Ability to stand in the king's palace" - a personality that would fit in with the royal court.

V. 8

"Purposed" = to firmly set in place; to establish; the word points to a firm, once-in-for-all decision.

"Defile" = to pollute, make unclean, to stain

Why did Daniel refuse? Basically, because he wanted to obey the Law of God.

1) Food not kosher (Dt. 14:3-20)
(not the right kind of meat; or not slain in accordance with the Mosaic Law)

2) Offered to idols
(The pagan Babylonians would have asked their "god" to bless the ones who ate of that food. Daniel, therefore, would be giving consent to their gods - Ex. 22:30, 34:14-15)

What is it that defiles us today?
It is not eating certain foods -- Acts 11:5-9; I Tim. 4:3-5; Rom. 14:14; I Cor. 8:4-8)

What defiles people is the sinful attitudes and actions that stem from the heart (SEE: Mark 7:20-23).

You need to purpose in your heart not to defile yourself with:

1) Evil thoughts (Titus 1:15)
2) Fornication (Gen. 34:2; I Cor. 6:18-20; Rev. 14:4)
3) Adultery (Heb. 13:4; Lev. 18:20; Num. 5:13)
4) Incest (Ezek. 22:11)
5) Homosexuality (I Tim. 1:10; Lev. 18:22, 24)
6) Bestiality (Lev. 18:21ff)
7) Innocent Bloodshed (Num. 35:33; Lev. 18:21)
8) Witchcraft & the Occult (Lev. 19:31)
9) Idolatry (Ezek. 20:7, 18)
10) Sinful words (Mt. 15:11; Ja. 3:6)
11) Bitterness (heb. 12:15)
12) Defiling God's Temple (I Cor. 3:17)

***We need to purpose in our hearts not to bend on our Bible convictions (v. 8).**

I. Obedience Will Always be TESTED (v. 5-7)

(The Test of Daniel's Convictions)

In an attempt to sever ties (to cut off) from their heritage, Nebuchadnezzar changed their:

1) Culture (v. 4) - "Learning" = literature, books
2) Language (v. 4) - "Tongue of the Chaldeans" (Aramaic)
3) Diet (v. 5)
4) Names (v. 7)

The name Daniel ("God ("El") is my Judge")
Changed to Belteshazzar ("May Bel protect his life")

The name Hananiah ("Yahweh is gracious")
Changed to Shadrach ("Command of Aku" - the moon god)

The name Mishael ("Who is what God ("El") is")
Changed to Meshach ("Who is what Aku is")

The name Azariah ("Whom Yahweh helps")
Changed to Abednego ("Servant of Nebo")

Regarding Daniel and his three friends, Nebuchadnezzar could change their names, but he could not change their character.

He could take God out of their names, but he could not take God out of their hearts.

*You can't do anything about what people want to call you, but no one can force you to do something against your convictions.
Daniel's decision to not conform to the king's diet meant:

1) He would disobey the king rather than God
(v. 5 - "appointed" = he specifically assigned or commanded the diet. The king ordered the menu; therefore, it was law!)

2) He would lose out on the finest food in Babylon.
("Meat" = dainties of a king; not ordinary meat, but the best, choicest meat anywhere. "The king's meat" = the meat of royalty)
3) He might spoil his chances for advancement
(It was an honor to be selected by Nebuchadnezzar)

4) He might lose his life
(Picture yourself in these circumstances: Teenagers among heathen, barbarious people who wouldn't think twice about killing another king's sons before his eyes and then gouging the king's eyes out [Jer. 39:6, 7]; or roasting someone in a slow fire [Jer. 29:22]) (Newelll, p. 22)

Why not give in? After all --

--They were a long way from home!
(our geographical location should not change our convictions)

--Nobody would have ever known!
(not true; people would have heard. Even if they never knew - God does! And His knowing is what really matters!)

--Everyone else is doing it!
(popularity of a practice does not make it right. Most people are going the broad way that leads to destruction [Mt. 7:13], but this does not mean we should go that way just because everyone else is!

II. Obedience Should Always be GRACIOUS (v. 8b-9)
(The Attitude of Daniel's Convictions)

V. 8

Note: How Daniel handled the government officials (v. 8) in defending (upholding) his convictions.

1) "He requested" - he sought permission; he asked; he did not tell them

We need right attitudes and proper actions in explaining our viewpoints to a world that is adverse to our convictions. The Bible says "it's an honor to cease from strife."

V. 9

"God had brought Daniel into favor..." - God did the same thing for Joseph (Gen. 39:21).

Because Daniel was Godly, the LORD gave him grace and mercy at the hands of his captors (cp. II Chron. 39:9; I Ki. 8:50; Ezr. 9:9; Ps. 106:46 - "He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives").

2) He asked with patience and wisdom

V. 12 - "I beseech thee" is another way of saying please

*Always be ethical, never rude or disrespectful (Ex. Yes, Sir; No, Sir; please; thank you; etc.)

Daniel was known among the lost people of his day as having an excellent spirit (Dan. 6:3)

Daniel treated the officials with kindness and respect.

People deserve respect for:

--Who they are (their position)
--What they do (their productiveness)
--What they are (their personal character)

Daniel respected authority.

Obedience does not have to be obnoxious!

Holding to convictions does not require a harsh, abrasive stand. Just an unmovable one!

III. Obedience Will Always Require FAITH (v. 10-14)

(The Faith of Daniel's Convictions)

ILLUS: Hymn - "Trust and Obey" -- Two essential elements to pure living in a pagan land.

--Trusting God is the key to obeying God.
"I believe therefore I obey"

V. 12
"Ten days"
--a time short enough that it could not possibly by turned down
--a time long enough for God to produce a notable change. (an observable change in only 10 days would be remarkable/truly miraculous. But Daniel had faith in God's faithfulness)

"Pulse" = vegetables/ in contrast to the king's meat
"Water" = in contrast to the king's wine

IV. Obedience Will Always be REWARDED (v. 9, 15-21)

(The REWARD of Daniel's Convictions)

When you decide to do right:

1) God immediately begins working on your behalf (v. 9).

God was already in the process of delivering Daniel.

"When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Prov. 16:7; cp. Gen. 33:4; II Chron. 17:10-11)

2) God will bless you beyond your imagination

Daniel received -

a) Physical blessing (v. 15-16)

Note: God is not promoting vegetarians, but faithful obedience)

b) Intellectual blessing (v. 17, 20)

c) Social (political) blessing (v. 18-21)

V. 19

"Communed with them" = lit. to intensely talk with someone (Piel stem).

Nebuchadnezzar evidently a brilliant man himself, asked them hard questions (v. 20) and found these four men to be outstanding, in a different "league" from the

others.

"Therefore stood they before the king"

Prov. 22:29 - "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean (obscure) men"

God promoted them. Let God promote you! (Ps. 75:6-7 - "For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.").

V. 20

"Ten times" - lit. ten hands better, meaning each one was better than ten men put together.

V. 21

God raised up Daniel to power in order to graciously improve the welfare and life of the Jews in Exile. The Israelites were treated well in Babylon and Medo-Persia because of Daniel [Note: Parallel between Joseph and his family and Daniel and his people - God used those men to protect and deliver them.]