



"But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the King's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself" (Daniel 1:8).

Faith in a New Land

Central Truth: A believer's faithfulness to God should not be hindered by his environment.

L561. Date: June 1980. **Text:** Daniel 1:1-9, 11, 12, 15, 17-20.

Topic: Faith: Of Believers; Obedience: To God/ Scripture.

An increasing controversy swirls around the book of the prophet Daniel. The problem lies not in a fault of the book, but in the unwillingness of men to accept what the book claims for itself. The book presents a very detailed history of world events for almost 450 years after Daniel became a prophet. Many hold that such detail could have been written only after the events occurred, and Daniel could not have been the author of the book which bears his name. We who believe in the miracle of supernatural predictive prophecy have no problem accepting the fact that Daniel was the author of the entire book. The controversy, therefore, is not over the book of Daniel, but over whether God spoke through prophets and foretold in detail events which would come to pass.

Daniel lived in the tragic days when his nation was dying. A series of weak and wicked kings had sealed her doom, and God had already announced her fall. As revealed through the prophet Habakkuk, God brought the Babylonian (sometimes called Chaldeans) upon Judah as a discipline for her sins. Three times the Babylonian armies came, and three times thousands of Judah's citizens were deported into the Babylonian captivity. In 605 B.C., Daniel was among the captives. In 597 B.C., Ezekiel was among the

captives. In 586 B.C., the city was totally destroyed and the temple was demolished. Daniel's entire ministry was spent in a foreign country speaking the message of God to pagan monarchs and captive Hebrews.

The book of the prophet Daniel lies in a two-fold structure. (1) The historical division contains six stories concerning the experiences which happened to Daniel and his Hebrew associates, and is recorded in the first six chapters of the book. (2) The prophetic division contains the record of four predictive visions concerning the history of world empires during and following his own time, and is recorded in the last six chapters of the book. The unusual nature of that prophetic section has caused Daniel to be called "The Revelation of the Old Testament."

The book of Daniel was written in two languages. The Hebrew language is used in 1:1-2:3 and 8:1—12:13. The Aramaic language is used in 2:4—7:28. The Hebrew language is used in the Jewish section of the book and the Aramaic language is used in the Gentile section of the book. Each section of the book has a key verse. The Jewish key is 10:14, "*Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days.*" The Gentile key is 4:17, "*To the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men.*"

The theme of the book is a call to loyalty to God. Faithfulness is a mark of the book of Daniel because it was a distinguishing quality in the man named Daniel. Today's study examines the subject of loyalty to God.

I. FAITHFULNESS WILL BE CHALLENGED (1:1-8)

A. Changing historical circumstances will challenge faithfulness (verses 1-3). Daniel was reared in Judah during a time of religious apostasy. Kings, priests, and prophets turned from God. His nation was overrun by an army from a pagan country. He was taken from his home and family and required to live in a foreign land. He had to learn the language, customs, and religion of that foreign country. Each of those circumstances was a temptation to turn from God, but in each situation he remained faithful.

Changing circumstances challenge commitment today. God does not change, however, so the people of God must not grow negligent in their loyal adherence to Him.

B. Enticing opportunities will challenge faithfulness (verses 4, 5). Daniel could have been assigned duties of the lowest and most demeaning kind of slavery. But instead, he was given opportunity to train for government service where he would receive respect and live in comfort. He was even given a diet of the same food and drink which the king enjoyed. It

would be very unwise to do anything which would threaten the loss of such opportunities.

Multitudes of God's people have been enticed by opportunities to progress in their business, gain more comfort, exercise more power, etc., if they would only compromise some point of Christian principle. Blessed are those who, like Daniel, have stood firm.

C. Community standards will challenge faithfulness (verses 5, 8). "Everyone else is doing it," Daniel could have reasoned as he ate the king's food and drank his wine. But Daniel was not responsible to God for the errors of all the rest. He was responsible for himself. Others might defile themselves with food and drink which God said was unclean to His people. "*But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself, . . . therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself*" (verse 8). Blessed is the Christian whose standards of conduct are not determined by the unregenerate society about him. Blessed is the Christian who lives by the Word of God.

D. Religious pressures will challenge faithfulness (verse 7). The names of Daniel and his three friends were changed. Daniel became *Belteshazzar*, Hananiah became *Shadrach*, Mishael became *Meshach*, Azariah became *Abed-nego*. The change was to make them more Babylonian by taking away the titles *el* and *iah* (names of the Hebrew God) and substituting *Bel*, *Nego*, and other names of Babylonian gods. It was a religious pressure put on the Hebrew young men to make them conform to the lifestyle of the Babylonians.

Not all pressure to conform comes in outward evidences of sinful rebellion. Often it comes in the form of seeming innocent and proper things. The devil is very subtle. Blessed is the believer who holds without wavering to the God who has revealed himself in Holy Scripture.

Do not be surprised when your loyalty to God is challenged. The devil will not let goodness go unchallenged. Know that the more fierce the test, the more significant is your loyalty to God. Resolve to faithfulness. Resist every enticement to yield. Rely on God for help. Victory is ahead!

II. FAITHFULNESS MUST BE MAINTAINED (1:8, 9, 12)

A. Faithfulness must be maintained in spite of the consequences (verse 8). Daniel's resolve to purity worked out to his benefit (verses 12-20). He did not know that when he made the resolve. He knew what was right and resolved to do right in spite of the consequences. That is what real loyalty is. It is not, "I will be faithful to you if. . . ." It is, "I will be faithful to you

without conditions or guarantees." Real Christian commitment is, "I will do the right because it is right. I will ask no guarantees in advance. I will serve God and let Him take care of the consequences."

Things do not always work out for the immediate advantage of the child of God. A certain man was fired by his employer because he refused to drink and carouse with prospective clients in order to enlist their business. (He afterward received a better position with another company, but he did not know that when he was released from his employment.) Loyalty to God must not take consequences into consideration as a condition for faithfulness.

B. Faithfulness must be maintained in full dependence on God. (verses 9, 12). There was the "risk of faith" taken by Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Their decision could have lost them all opportunities they had gained. But they had resolved to do right and leave the consequences in the hand of God.

They believed God would vindicate their resolve, since it was based upon His law. Therefore, they requested their superior to try them on a diet of vegetables and water, instead of the diet of the king's food and drink. They took the step of faith and left the matter in the hands of God. Who is willing today to be faithful because God has spoken? Who is willing to take a stand and leave the results with God? Blessed is such a person.

III. FAITHFULNESS WILL BE REWARDED (1:15,17-20)

A. Faithful people of God will be vindicated before men (verse 15). For ten days Daniel and his three associates ate only vegetables and drank only water. At the end of that time, careful investigation brought a surprising discovery to the prince of the eunuchs. Their complexion was clearer and their minds more alert than those who ate the king's diet. God had vindicated His faithful servants in the eyes of their masters. God is faithful! That truth should be implanted in the mind of each Christian today. He who vindicated the ancient Hebrews in the eyes of their peers will certainly vindicate His believing children today. No need to ask for proof in advance. All the Christian has seen in the Bible and by personal experience teaches him to trust God for all he has not yet seen or experienced. God never fails.

B. Faithful people of God will be vindicated by God (verse 17). What was the explanation of the triumph by Daniel and His three friends? God is the explanation: "*God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom*" (verse 17). God was involved in their circumstances. If they had yielded to the pressure to conform, He would have had no opportunity to

show himself strong on their behalf. Their faithfulness to Him gave opportunity for them to see His faithfulness to them.

God has not deserted His people today. He who is *"the same yesterday, and today, and for ever"* is the God whom we trust and serve (Hebrews 13:8). We who are loyal to Him today will find Him loyal to us today.

C. Faithful people of God will find opportunities for greater service (verses 18-20). The wisdom, knowledge, and skill in learning which God gave the four Hebrews enlarged their ministries. They were brought before the king for examination. They were found *"ten times better"* than any of the other counsellors with whom the king communed. That ability was the basis on which they afterwards were exalted to positions of power in the kingdom (Daniel 2:48, 49).

God will place in positions of service those whom He knows He can trust to perform the service faithfully. Jesus said the one who was faithful in the little will be faithful in the much (Luke 16:10-12; Matthew 25:21). That is one reason some have opportunities which others do not have.

The following statement may express the central truth of the lesson: God is faithful to each person who is faithful to Him. That does not mean that man's faithfulness is a deed of merit by which he deserves God's faithfulness. It means man's faithfulness to God provides opportunity for God to manifest His faithfulness to man. Only the person who is convinced of the faithfulness of God will have the courage to be faithful to Him. Such faithfulness is not to be occasional but continual. If you want to see God at work in your life, follow Him faithfully.

Here is the principle illustrated in Daniel and expressed four times elsewhere in the Bible, *"The just shall live by faith"* (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38; see also Habakkuk 2:4).

1. What controversy surrounds the book of Daniel?
2. In what historical situation did Daniel live?
3. Describe the structure and languages of the book of Daniel.
4. What are the keys and theme of the book?
5. How was Daniel's loyalty to God challenged?
6. How might such a challenge come to a Christian today?
7. How did Daniel maintain his loyalty to God?
8. How can a Christian maintain his loyalty today?
9. How can a Christian be sure God will reward his faithfulness?
10. How has the study profited you personally?