

Sermon

Moving from Our Comfort Zone to Our Character

Daniel - A Portrait of Integrity

Daniel 1:8-21; 6:1-10

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. 9 Now God had caused the official to show favor and compassion to Daniel, 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."

11 Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, 12 "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. 13 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." 14 So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.

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

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.

18 At the end of the time set by the king to bring them into his service, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. 19 The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. 20 In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.

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

Daniel 6:1-10 (NIV)

It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, 2 with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss. 3 Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. 4 At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find

no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. 5 Finally these men said, “We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.”

6 So these administrators and satraps went as a group to the king and said: “May King Darius live forever! 7 The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lions’ den. 8 Now, Your Majesty, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.” 9 So King Darius put the decree in writing.

10 Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.

Over the past few weeks we have been looking at the Character traits that God wants us to develop in our lives. We looked at Noah and the character trait of Faith, Abraham and Obedience, Joshua and Caleb and commitment, and last week Deborah and courage. For the next four weeks I want us to look at some Character Traits that come as a result of developing our faith, obedience, commitment and courage. Today I want to look at Daniel and integrity.

I. DANIEL WAS A MAN OF PURPOSE

A. DANIEL PURPOSED IN HIS HEART

1. It was his purpose in life, to always put God first.
2. God had given the chief official great respect for Daniel.
That comes with consistency.
3. When he proposed the challenge, the official knew that Daniel would keep his word.
4. We can’t be like the man who said: "I am a man of fixed and unbending principles, the first of which is to be flexible at all times."

B. WE NEED TO BE A PEOPLE OF PURPOSE

1. Mt 6:33 “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.”
2. Are we willing to be A Daniel in regards to purpose?

II. DANIEL WAS A MAN OF PRINCIPLE

A. HE REFUSED TO COMPROMISE HIS PRINCIPLES

1. Dan 1:8 Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself in this way.
2. Ken Wales is a TV and film producer, who has produced several, award-winning TV series and films, including Christy, East of Eden and the highly-acclaimed movie Amazing Grace. Wales has enjoyed tremendous success as a producer, but he started his Hollywood career as an unemployed actor. Early in his career, Wales chose to turn down a significant role because it conflicted with his faith in Christ. While he was under contract with MGM, he was cast for a film starring Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra, and Shirley MacLaine. At one point in the script, his character enticed a young woman to get drunk so he could take advantage of her. Wales described his decision to decline the role:

"I had been speaking to a lot of church groups and conventions around the country on the subject of making right choices. So when I read ... the script ... I had to meet with the director, Vincente Minnelli, to tell him I couldn't do it. He told me, 'You'll do it, or you'll be out of your contract, you'll go on suspension, you'll have no salary for a year, and I'll see that you never work in this town again.' I told him he'd have to find someone else, and he literally threw me out of his office.

"I was put on suspension," Wales said. "When the film came out the following year, I was speaking at a youth convention in Denver, to about 600 kids. We took a break at dinner time, and everybody piled out to see a movie and to get pizza. As we started to walk across the street, there was a huge marquee with a sign for the movie I'd turned down. And I thought that was interesting. What if I'd done that film and the kids had gone in and seen it?"
3. In Daniel 6:10 when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened towards Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.
4. God wants us to stand up for what we know is right and good.

B. OUR EXAMPLE SHOULD BE CLEAR FOR OTHERS

1. 1Co 11:1 Paul said: And you should follow my example, just as I follow Christ's.

2. Are we willing to be A Daniel in regards to principle

III. DANIEL WAS A MAN OF PURITY

A. HIS OPPONENTS COULD FIND NO FAULT

1. Daniel 6:1-4 the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent.

B. THE CHRISTIAN SHOULD MAINTAIN PURITY OF CONDUCT.

1. I Timothy 4:12; set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.
2. Integrity can be defined as: wholeness; uprightness; honesty or soundness of moral principle and character.

4. Dr. Bob Reccord, president of the International Missions Board told about a pastor friend in Texas who was in a hurry after his regular office hours at the church. He had to get to the mall to buy some items, go to his daughter's school to pick her up, take her home, get to a church officers meeting, and then to spend the evening in counseling sessions.

Once in the mall, he saw an advertisement on a music store window that said, "2 CD's for \$9.99." He loved music so he just had to take advantage of the sale. He went in and picked up 2 CD's he'd really wanted, and went to the register to pay for them. He threw down with his money while talking to everyone around him -- as pastors do. Then he picked up his bag and his change and went out of the mall.

When he threw the bag in the front seat of his car, he noticed for the first time that the clerk had charged him \$1.99 instead of \$9.99 for those CD's. His first thought was that he didn't have time to go back in to get it fixed. But a small voice kept saying, "You don't have time not to." So, he went back in, stood in the same line until it came his time to talk to the clerk once again. He said, "Look I'm in a hurry. You made a mistake. The sign says \$9.99 and you charged me \$1.99. Please make this correct so I can get on with what I have to do."

She said, "Sir, I didn't make a mistake."

He said, "Sure you did. There's the sign; here's the receipt. Please make the correction."

She said, "No, sir, I didn't make a mistake."

He said, "What do you mean?!!"

She said, "Can I tell you the rest of the story. Will you let me finish, please?" He said, "Yes I will."

She said, "For 17 years I've been out of church. Recently, my life has been falling apart and I needed to get back into church. I looked around at what was closest to me. I found the name of the church and I went there Sunday and slipped in and sat on the back row. The pastor that day was speaking on integrity. Sir, it happened to be your church. And when I saw you in my line, I wondered if this was something you preached on Sunday or lived on Monday. And I determined to find out."

Then she said, "Sir, I don't even know the right questions to ask, but I know that whatever you've got I need." And then she began to cry.

Do you think she would have ever gone to church again if this pastor had not gone back in? Our witness, even in the everyday events of our lives, makes a difference in others' lives.

5. Are we willing to be A Daniel" in regards to purity?

IV. DANIEL WAS A MAN OF GOD.

A. He believed in prayer. -

1. During the Korean War, I read where many of our soldiers under the awful brainwashing of the North Koreans were not able to remain loyal to the USA.
2. Some cursed their country, some spit upon the flag and some even disowned their mothers.
3. what I am saying is where these men failed under this pressure,
4. Daniel under pressure remained loyal, and faithful to God.
5. Daniel had a real bad day when he faced the lion's den but he remained true.
6. In our text, he is called by God, "Daniel the beloved."

B. NOTICE DANIEL'S DEDICATION: 6:5

1. A mother was teaching her child to pray. When he got to the part, "I surrender everything to Thee, everything I own," he abruptly broke off and whispered to himself, "except my baby rabbit."
2. Daniel wan't dedicated just partly, but he went all the way with the Lord in his dedication.
3. We need that kind of dedication in our day.

C. HE WAS DEDICATED TO THE WORD OF GOD: V-5

These men trapped him because they knew he would be true to the Word of God.

1. According to C. H. Spurgeon, "A Bible which is falling apart usually belongs to someone who isn't!" The key to victory is "It is written."

D. -HE WAS DEDICATED TO THE WILL OF GOD: 6:10

1. As a youth, he purposed in his heart, that is, he dedicated himself to the fact he wouldn't go against God's will in eating the king's meat and drinking the king's wine.
2. He started right, so he remained right.
3. I heard a preacher once say, "Apply yourself wholly to the Scriptures and apply the Scriptures wholly to yourself."
4. Some read the Bible but never apply its truths to thy life.
5. Illustration: Judson the great missionary was called to a rich Boston Church as its pastor but said it was not God's Will. Instead, he said, it was God's will for him to go to Burma. During his lifetime, the Church baptized a couple of hundred, but Judson in Burma baptized over 50,000. Why? Because he was in God's will.
5. A certain pastor claimed that his church people would be the first to go up in the clouds to meet the Lord Jesus at the Second Coming "And on what basis do you make this remarkable assumption?" asked a colleague. The pastor replied with the following reason: "The Bible says, 'The dead in Christ shall rise first!'"
6. Well many Christians are dead, that is they are dead when it come to doing God's will.
7. ILLUSTRATION:It is said that D.L. Moody was once preaching to a great crowd and was pouring out his very soul with great earnestness. After the service a man who was a leader in one of the fashionable churches of the city, and who had been on the platform while Moody spoke, went to the evangelist and said, "By the way, I noticed that you made eleven mistakes in grammar tonight." "I don't doubt it," said Moody. "My early education was very faulty. I have often wished that I had received more schooling. But I am using all the grammar I know in the service of Christ. How is it with you?" The man had no answer.

ILLUSTRATION: Cecil Northcott in *A Modern Epiphany* tells of a discussion in a camp of young people where representatives of many nations were living together. "One wet night the campers were discussing various ways of telling people about Christ. They turned to the girl from Africa. 'Maria,' they asked, 'what do you do in your country?' 'Oh,' said Maria, 'we don't have missions or give pamphlets away. We just send one or two Christian families to live and work in a village, and when people see what Christians are like, then they want to be Christians too.'" In the end the only all-conquering argument is the argument of a Christian life.

Charles Wesley wrote a poem that speaks to the need we have to live like a Daniel. It isn't in either of the hymnals so I will read it to you.

I want a principle within
Of *jealous, godly fear,
A sensibility of sin,
A pain to feel it near.
I want the first approach to feel
Of pride or *fond desire,
To catch the wand'ring of my will,
And quench the kindling fire.
From Thee that I no more may part,
No more Thy goodness grieve,
The filial awe, the fleshly heart,
The tender conscience, give.
Quick as the apple of an eye,
O God, my conscience make;
Awake my soul when sin is nigh,
And keep it still awake.
Almighty God of truth and love,
To me Thy pow'r impart;
The mountain from my soul remove,
The hardness from my heart.
Oh, may the least omission pain
My reawakened soul,
And drive me to that blood again,
Which makes the wounded whole.

Prayer

