

Walk Through the Bible

1 Samuel 15:22 NKJV

22 So Samuel said: "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams."

Dangerous Obedience

October 28, 2012

Daniel 1

Pastor Jonathan M. Welch

Introduction:

So if you have been reading along in your RMM reading plan you would have hit this passage about 2 weeks ago. We often times see the first chapter of Daniel as a quaint little story that sets up cool stories of a fiery furnace and a lion's den. The first chapter however has much to teach us of God's expectation in our lives. Let me set this up for you. Nebuchadnezzar is a very powerful king in Babylon. He has his eyes set on world domination and he finds a rich target in Judah. So he sends his armies and God gives Judah over to Nebuchadnezzar. The reason he does this is found in Isaiah 39.

Isaiah 39:1-8 NKJV

1 At that time Merodach-Baladan the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that he had been sick and had recovered.

2 And Hezekiah was pleased with them, and showed them the house of his treasures--the silver and gold, the spices and precious ointment, and all his armory--all that was found among his treasures. There was nothing in his house or in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them.

3 Then Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah, and said to him, "What did these men say, and from where did they come to you?" So Hezekiah said, "They came to me from a far country, from Babylon."

4 And he said, "What have they seen in your house?" So Hezekiah answered, "They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shown them."

5 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD of hosts:

6 'Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and what your fathers have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,' says the LORD.

7 'And they shall take away some of your sons who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.' "

8 So Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good!" For he said, "At least there will be peace and truth in my days."

After Nebuchadnezzar's win he brings articles from the temple to the temple of his god as a way to signify that his god is stronger than the God of the Jews. Nebuchadnezzar finds out throughout his life that this is not the case, as the one true God makes him eat grass and act like a cow for seven years, but that is a whole other sermon. What Nebby does next is he takes some of the royal family and presses them into service. He does this for several reasons. 1. He wants to preemptively quell any rebellions that might arise. So, he takes the leadership away. 2. He wants to assimilate the Jews into his own culture. What better way of doing this than taking the Harry, and William and putting them through Babylon University? 3. He has now gained some great help in running his kingdom. Once trained he has bilingual staff that can help when he runs into trouble with the Jews in the future he can call on these guys for help.

Nebuchadnezzar is a smart guy, but he is not who I want to focus on this morning. We need to look down at verse three and take a look at what happens next.

Away From Home

Let's read starting in verse three.

Daniel 1:3, 4 NKJV

- 3 Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles,*
4 young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans.

As I mentioned a few moments ago Nebuchadnezzar had some of the young men of Judah deported. These four young men were smart, handsome, and knowledgeable. They were able to learn quickly. These are the who's who of Middle-East Idol. They were taken from their homes and brought to Babylon to learn from the wise men and be trained to serve the king. For these four men this was like going to university, only not by choice but by force. They were in a new place with new names. Just like university they were relatively unknown. Now they had a choice:

To Compromise or NOT to Compromise?

Look down at verse five.

Daniel 1:5-10 NKJV

- 5 And the king appointed for them a daily provision of the king's delicacies and of the wine which he drank, and three years of training for them, so that at the end of that time they might serve before the king.*
6 Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.
7 To them the chief of the eunuchs gave names: he gave Daniel the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abed-Nego.
8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

Daniel was taken to university on a full ride scholarship, with the world's best meal plan, and as much booze as he wanted. And yet he refused to defile himself. Now, we are not told why he didn't eat the king's food or drink his wine. There are many speculations. Such as all the king's food would have been sacrificed to an idol before the king ate it. But later on in the book Daniel eats with the king. The truth is we just don't know what it was about the food and drink that was unclean for these young men. What we do know is that Daniel decides that his God is more important than his comfort and acceptance. So he makes this request of the Chief of the Eunuchs.

Dangerous Obedience

Look down at verse nine:

Daniel 1:9-14 NKJV

- 9 Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs.*
10 And the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who has appointed your food and drink. For why should he see your faces looking worse than the young men who are your age? Then you would endanger my head before the king."

11 So Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,

12 "Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink.

13 Then let our appearance be examined before you, and the appearance of the young men who eat the portion of the king's delicacies; and as you see fit, so deal with your servants."

14 So he consented with them in this matter, and tested them ten days.

Here we see the extent to which Daniel was willing to go. It was not an easy thing make the request that Daniel did. While Daniel was on a full ride with all the trappings one thing differed from today's universities. If you made the president of this university mad he would and could KILL you! That fact caused most of the young men taken with Daniel to live in compromise.

God's Blessing

Look at verses 15 to 21

Daniel 1:15-21 NKJV

15 And at the end of ten days their features appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king's delicacies.

16 Thus the steward took away their portion of delicacies and the wine that they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

17 As for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

18 Now at the end of the days, when the king had said that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.

19 Then the king interviewed them, and among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they served before the king.

20 And in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm.

21 Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus.

We already see God working in verse 9. God have given Daniel favor in the chief steward's eyes, and now he uses water and vegetables to make Daniel and his friends healthier than all the other young men from Judah. So much so that the steward takes everyone else's food away and gives them what these four are eating. Now I don't think that this is biblical evidence for a Christian vegan diet, because, if God wanted us all to eat only vegetables he would have made them out of meat. God uses the obedience of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah to set them in positions to be used for his glory. All of the other stories in the book of Daniel flow from this time of obedience.

Conclusion

Let me take some time here to talk to you as the pastor of the young people. I am glad that there are many of you university students here to hear this message. As with all young people there is a difficult choice to make when we venture out on our own. As Christians we know that we are to be different, but the university life gives us unique opportunities to get out from under our parents rules and strike out on our own. There is this once in a lifetime opportunity to be our own person and create our own values. Daniel had this same opportunity. Here he was a guest of the most powerful king in the world. He was offered food straight from the kings table. He could have completely disregarded what he was taught about God back home. But he didn't. Daniel purposed in his heart not to defile himself. He chose to be obedient even when it was dangerous. The temptation to live outside of God's boundaries is often times overwhelming. Especially if you don't decide to make a stand like Daniel did. If you don't purpose in your hearts to make a stand for the Lord you will fall away.

Romans 12:2 NKJV

2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Are you willing to be obedient when it means that you get singled out? Parents, in our society today we give these phenomenon cute little names like, expanding our horizons, or sowing the wild oats, or stretching their wings. We tend to laugh it off as a phase and we think that those that follow this path will come back to the Lord after the phase is over. What we fail to do is call this what it is...sin. I know of a young man who did months worth of research trying to figure out why our young people are leaving the church in droves. He has six three inch binders of research. And I think to myself...WHY? Our youth have no faith of their own. They need their parents to lead them into a real solid faith. I know you want them to be obedient to the Word of God after they leave you, but are you concerned that they are living for the Lord or fitting in at school. Are you concerned about their testimony or are you protecting them from getting picked on for their faith. We are to be living as examples of Christ ourselves, and so instead of scratching our heads as to why they are leaving the church we should be teaching them what it means to be a true follower of Christ. You need to be teaching your children God's word not worldly materialism. Are your children learning to stand for Christ when they are under scrutiny from your example or are they learning to conform to the pattern of this world? How you live now is a good indicator how your kids will live away from you.

Deuteronomy 4:9 NKJV

9 Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren,

Do you live a life of dangerous obedience? Or do you live a life of conformity? Let's choose the life of obedience.