

Daniel:
Conviction in an Age of Compromise

Resolve Not to Compromise

Daniel 1:1-8

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Resolve Not to Compromise

Scripture

Today I would like to begin a new sermon series on the first six chapters of Daniel.

“Why Daniel?” you might ask. That’s a fair question. There are two main reasons prompting me to preach from Daniel.

First, I would like to preach from a book in the Old Testament. Some of you have asked me to preach from the Old Testament, and I agree that it is time to preach from an Old Testament book. And Daniel, of course, is found in the Old Testament.

And second, I would like to preach on the book of Daniel because I think it is relevant to us living in the 21st century. Daniel found himself as a child of God living in a foreign culture. As we shall see, Daniel was captured and deported as young boy from his home in Jerusalem to live his entire life in the foreign city of Babylon. commentator D. A. Carson says, “The context in which the life of Daniel is set is summed up in the question asked by the exiles in Babylon, recorded in Psalm 137:4, ‘How can we sing the song of the Lord while in a foreign land?’ The entire book teaches us that this world will always be a ‘foreign land’ to the people of God (*cf.* John 17:16; Philippians 3:20a). God’s people are ‘strangers in the world’ (1 Peter 1:1, 17), surrounded by malignant and destructive enemies (1 Peter 5:8-9). Yet, it is possible to live in a way which brings praise and honor to God, just as Daniel did.”¹

It is my hope and prayer that by studying the first six chapters of Daniel we will learn how to live with conviction in an age of compromise.

So, with that in mind, today’s sermon is titled, “Resolve Not to Compromise,” which is found in Daniel 1:1-8:

¹ Carson, D. A. (1994). *New Bible commentary : 21st century edition*. Rev. ed. of: The new Bible commentary. 3rd ed. / edited by D. Guthrie, J.A. Motyer. 1970. (4th ed.) (Eze 47:1). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press.

¹ In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ² And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god.

³ Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility— ⁴ young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. ⁵ The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service.

⁶ Among these were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. ⁷ The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

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. (Daniel 1:1-8)

Introduction

We live in an age of compromise. The question I want to pose as we begin a series of sermons on the life of Daniel is this: how can you live with conviction in an age of compromise?

The lure to compromise is felt by all people whether Christian or non-Christian. Daniel was invited to compromise his faith on many occasions, but his life is an example to us of conviction in an age of compromise. His life and message stand out as a significant statement, offering hope for today and insight for tomorrow.

Dr. Bryan Chapell, president of Covenant Theological Seminary, the seminary of our denomination, tells a true story of one individual's resolve not to compromise her faith. Karen worked a

full-time job in order to keep Randy, her husband and a seminary student, in school and food on the table. Karen worked as a quality control inspector for a major pharmaceutical company.

One day, at Karen's work, a large order of syringes became contaminated and therefore failed her inspection. When Karen reported the problem to her boss, he quickly computed the costs of reproducing the order and then he made a "cost-effective" decision. He ordered her to go ahead and sign the inspection clearance, despite the contamination.

Because of certain federal regulations, only Karen could sign the clearance forms. If she did not sign the forms, the syringes could not be sold. Karen refused to sign the forms.

Even though her boss threatened her, Karen would not budge. The impasse between Karen and her boss led to a visit from the company president. He also computed the costs and then told her that the forms must be signed! Karen would have the weekend to think over her decision. It was made very clear that her job was now in jeopardy.

In fact, much more than Karen's job was in jeopardy. You see, her job was this couple's only means of support. Randy's education and their family's future were now in danger. All their hopes, dreams and career plans of many years could now be shattered as a result of a choice to be made in only two days.

For this young couple, all the theological jargon about living an obedient Christian life came down to this one very concrete decision: could they afford to compromise and remain undefiled before God?²

This couple's predicament is very similar to what God's people have faced in all the ages. There have always been pressures on believers to compromise their obedience to God.

If you are serious about living an obedient Christian life, you can count on facing multiple pressures to compromise your stand. Some of you will be pressured by an employer. Others will be

² Bryan Chapell, *Standing Your Ground: Messages on Daniel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), 19-21.

pressured by friends or relatives. Then there is the internal pressure that comes from our own natural desires. There are the pressures of trying to get ahead, a promotion, a large contract, an “A” on an exam, and so on. Such pressures confront anyone who seeks to live uncompromisingly for the Lord in any generation.

In the opening chapter of the book of Daniel we are introduced to a very remarkable person. Daniel is one of those rare individuals who learned how to stand strong for the Lord in the face of very real temptations. The facts of Daniel’s life are simple enough. Let me set the scene for you.

Daniel was born into a Jewish family of nobility and royalty in Jerusalem. He was a young prince in the making with a very bright future. But one day his city was attacked by the mighty Babylonian army from the east under king Nebuchadnezzar.

Verse 1 reads, **“In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.”** It was a gruesome battle! The city of Jerusalem was literally flattened.

We find in verse 2 that Nebuchadnezzar hit Jerusalem where she hurt the most—the temple of God, **“And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god.”** Those precious temple vessels that meant so much to the Jewish sacred worship were taken to be used for idol worship in Babylon.

But I also want you to note that God sovereignly allowed all of this to happen. God was not sitting in heaven wringing his hands in despair, wondering what was happening to his beloved Jerusalem. No! Verse 2 clearly affirms that it was **the Lord** who *delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into the hand* of Nebuchadnezzar. One of Daniel’s purposes in writing this book is to assure God’s people that God is sovereign and in control of *all* human events, even those events that appear to be in opposition to God’s people.

Well, as in any war, behind all the grandiose military exploits were very real people whose lives were being torn apart. Although Daniel's future once looked very bright as a member of the royal family, he was now a prisoner of war in the country of his enemy, Babylon.

Daniel's captivity and deportation to Babylon had now dimmed any hope of him ever having a position of power or honor. He was no longer a prince in the making! He was now a lowly prisoner in captivity.

Then suddenly came a very unexpected turn of events! We learn from verses 3-4 that the Babylonian king ordered Ashpenaz, his chief of staff, to train several of these Jewish captives for governmental service: **“Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility—young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians.”**

The use of the Hebrew word translated **“young men”** indicates that Daniel and his friends were probably somewhere between 13-19 years old! These were young teenage boys!

Daniel and his three friends were being brought face to face with a test! Daniel could be a prince again! He could have a position of honor and power in the Babylonian Empire! All he had to do was compromise his obedience to Almighty God and receive the training, pass the tests and go along with the privileges all the others were enjoying—and a future now blighted would shine brightly again. What would he do? What would you do?

Lesson

In Daniel 1:1-8 we find that king Nebuchadnezzar used several clever strategies to tempt these young citizens of God's kingdom to the ways of his own kingdom. And I want us to take a close

look at these strategies proposed to Daniel because they are the same strategies our enemy uses against us today to get us to compromise our faith in Almighty God.

I. The Strategies Designed to Bring About Compromise (1:1-7)

First, notice the strategies designed to bring about compromise.

A. Isolation (1:1-2)

The first strategy designed to bring about compromise is isolation.

As a result of the fall of Jerusalem described in verses 1 and 2, Daniel found himself isolated from all the positive influences that were previously molding his life and character in the ways of godliness.

Although it's not mentioned here, at the time of the siege and capture of Jerusalem Daniel was most likely taken away from his parents. It was probably the last time Daniel ever saw them. And I'm sure they spent a great deal of time wondering how he was and where he was.

The king anticipated that once Daniel was isolated from all of his religious influences, it would just be a matter of time until Daniel's faith and obedience to God would simply die out.

I can't tell you how many Christians I have seen suffer the tragic consequences of sin because they have allowed themselves to be isolated from God's word and God's people.

We live in a culture which is hostile to the things of God. There is a constant effort to isolate a person from anything that is Christian. For example, children cannot pray in school. You cannot display anything overtly Christian, such as a Bible, in your office. You cannot see a display of the Ten Commandments in a court-

room. Chaplains in the military are being pressured not to pray “in Jesus’ name.” And on and on it goes.

The pressure to compromise is there and it will not go away. And one of the strategies designed to bring about compromise is isolation. Let me encourage you not to be isolated from God’s word and from God’s people.

The more you allow yourself to be isolated from these two means of grace, the more risk you are taking. Conversely, the more you are regularly under the teaching of God’s word and connected to God’s people, the stronger you will be when temptations come your way.

Maybe it’s time again for a spiritual check up! How is your time in the word? Are you reading the Scriptures regularly? Are you consistently hearing the word taught? And are you regularly fellowshiping with God’s people?

Never forget that one of the enemy’s greatest strategies to defeat you is this strategy of isolation. The more you allow yourself to be isolated from the means of God’s grace, the more vulnerable you are to being attacked and defeated.

B. Indoctrination (1:3-4)

The second strategy designed to bring about compromise is indoctrination.

Nebuchadnezzar’s goal was to take these young bright Jewish boys and turn them into cultural Babylonians. So at the end of verse 4 we find that his goal was **“to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians.”**

Daniel was to be indoctrinated in the whole philosophy and worldview of the Babylonians. This three-year training included Medicine, Law, Math, Astronomy, Religion and a dozen other so-called Solid Courses. There were no electives. He couldn’t take basket weaving. It was a very intensive three-year course to teach them a very different way of thinking about life and values.

Notice down in verses 6-7 that one other element involved in their indoctrination was the changing of their names. Anything that reminded them of their origin or destiny had to be removed. The names their parents gave them had incorporated the Hebrew words for the God of Israel. But their new names incorporated the names of Babylonian deities.

So Daniel's name became Belteshazzar. The top god in Babylon at this time was called Bel. Daniel's new name meant "Bel's Prince." Hananiah was given the name Shadrach, which meant "Inspired by the god Shad." To Mishael he gave the name Meshach, which means "Who is like the god Shak?" And Azariah was given the name Abednego, which means "Servant of the Shining god of Fire."

As they underwent this intensive training and heard their new names called out day after day, year after year, it was very easy for them to begin thinking of themselves as citizens of Babylon rather than citizens of Jerusalem. They were tempted to begin thinking like the Babylonians. That was the king's strategy!

Recently, Ron Nash, a philosophy professor at Western Kentucky University, wrote a book titled *The Closing of the American Heart*. (Nash's book goes beyond Alan Bloom's best-seller titled *The Closing of the American Mind*.) Nash makes the point that there is a very serious cultural battle going on today, not only for the minds of young people but also for the hearts of young people. Nash exposes that old *myth of neutrality* so prevalent today. He reminds us that no teacher is truly neutral, nor is any textbook or curriculum. So we as parents must not sit by passively and allow our children to be inundated, day in and day out, year in and year out with a worldview that is nothing more than forms of relativism, positivism, secularism, and post-modernism.

I fear that we as Christians we have failed to exercise our responsibility as citizens to monitor and influence the education of our children. I believe that one of the greatest challenges Christian parents face today is to teach our children *how* to think about life, and to cultivate in them not just religious habits, as good as they

are, but to teach them the ability to think about life and life's issues from God's perspective. And quite frankly, that begins by parents learning to do that first.

C. Immorality (1:5-7)

The third strategy designed to bring about compromise is immorality.

Notice in verse 5 we are told that the **“the king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table.”**

There was nothing wrong with this food—physically. In fact it was the very finest gourmet food and drinks anywhere! So what was the problem?

Old Testament Scholars believe it was either: (1) Food that had been offered to the Babylonian idols; or (2) Food that had been declared unclean by God for the Jews in the Law; or (3) Food that was simply an effort to seduce Daniel into the lifestyle of a Babylonian.

The good life Daniel was being offered was intended by the king to wean him away from the life to which God had called him. It was meant to cause him to focus on himself and on a life of enjoyment.

Notice how Daniel seems to never have been confronted with strong intellectual arguments against his beliefs. The attack was far more subtle than that, and therefore far more lethal.

The king knew enough about the human heart to know that most people have their price. Good times, comforts, self-esteem strokes and a prestigious position in society are usually a sufficient bid for a soul.

II. The Response Designed to Bring about Conviction (1:8)

Second, notice the response designed to bring about conviction.

Daniel responded by resolving not to compromise: **“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”** (1:8).

This story is so familiar and so bathed in the aura of Sunday School story time that it’s very easy to miss the great risk that Daniel was taking here.

Imagine an eighteen-year old teenager today. Although he is handsome, talented, intelligent and shows great promise, he simply cannot afford college because his family is poor. He graduates from high school only to spend one miserable day after another flipping hamburgers at the local McDonald’s.

Then out of the blue, something amazing happens. He comes home one day, sweating and smelling of French fries, and his Mom meets him at the door. She says, “Son, the President is on the phone for you.”

“Sure, Mom! That really cheers me up,” he says.

Then his Mom says, “No, I mean it. The President of the United States is on the phone—for you.”

And it is true. The President is on the phone. “Son,” he says, “I hear you have the intelligence and the grades but you just don’t have the money. I’m going to make it up to you.”

The young man nearly faints as he listens to the President’s offer: A full scholarship to the best university near Washington, D.C. The President says the he can even live in the White House, eat with him, and get a Secret Service escort to and from school.

And upon graduation, the young man will be awarded an ambassador’s position in the diplomatic service. Suddenly this obscure young man is going to have all the world can offer. His potential will be realized and his dreams will be fulfilled!

But there is one slight hitch. The President says that because the young man is being groomed for a job in the State Department he should begin practicing diplomacy now. “We hear that you are a committed Christian. That’s great. A little religion is good for anyone. However, we get a lot of different people from different

places and religions coming through the White house. We don't want to embarrass or upset anyone. So I want a promise from you that you will never read the Bible, pray, or attend church as long as you live in my house or work in the foreign service."

Picture yourself as that young person. What would you say? Would you make that promise? Removed from the actual situation and the pressures of reality, it's very easy for us to say today that we would not take up that offer. But is it really that simple?

Husband, if your wife was being asked to sign a clearance form for contaminated products and her decision determined the future of your career and family plans, would the choice be so cut and dried?

The costs involved in making a serious commitment to following Christ are sometimes very high. Verse 8 tells us that Daniel resolved not to defile himself.

Conclusion

Well, how can you resolve not to compromise?

Think of Christ. He was tempted just as Daniel was. And yet he never compromised. Instead Jesus eventually paid the price of all of our sin. Jesus paid the penalty for all of our falls into isolation, indoctrination, and immorality. He now invites us to place it all at the foot of the cross.

If you have fallen, if you have slipped, if you have not been as faithful as you know you should be, you can simply bring your failure and your sin to Jesus. Acknowledge your sin to him; he knows about it anyway! Ask him to cleanse you and forgive you.

Your motivation not to compromise your faith is an expression of gratitude to Christ for all that he has done to bring you into a right relationship with the Father. Christ died to secure a place in heaven for you. The least you can do in gratitude to him is to resolve not to compromise your faith. Amen.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and **membership** in his church family,
develop them to Christlike **maturity**,
equip them for their **ministry** in the church
and life **mission** in the world,
in order to **magnify** God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

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PRAYER:

Our gracious God, we thank you for the example of Daniel you have set before us in your Word today. But even more so, we thank you for the example of Jesus, who from a bloodstained cross made very clear to us the risks involved in a life of holiness.

Just as Jesus resolved not to defile himself so that your purposes might be accomplished, so we ask you to grant us your grace through him so that we might truly follow in his steps.

For those here today who do not know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, cause them even now to say in their hearts, “Lord Jesus, thank you for dying for my sin. Thank you for paying the ultimate price of giving your life so that I might know forgiveness for my sins and have power for living the life you have called me to live. I now turn from my sin and acknowledge you as the Lord and King of my life.”

Our Father we all ask you to make us a people of resolve, a people willing to make up our minds to live in obedience to you no matter what the price. Amen.

CHARGE:

By the way, Karen did refuse to sign the clearance forms for the contaminated syringes. The bad news is that it did cost her the job. But the good news is that she kept her integrity and walk with God. Now, may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all forevermore. Amen.