

Daniel 1:8–21

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[0 : 00] Our passage is Daniel 1 verses 8-21. I'm going to ask that you please stand, those of you who are able for the reading of God's! Let me share with you this truth, that when you encounter God's Word, you encounter God in action.

Amen. And the text reads like this, but Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food or with the wine that they drank.

Therefore, he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself. And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs.

And the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, I fear my lord the king who has assigned your food and your drink.

And all the magicians and the enchanters that were in all his kingdom.

[2 : 33] And Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus. This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

I'm going to trade in last week's sermon title for something fresh.

If last week we hung our message on the four words of verse two and the Lord gave.

truth. This week I'm going to hang my sermon on the opening of the reading, namely titling this sermon, resolve is required.

There it is, verse eight, but Daniel resolved. I want to argue this morning from this text that God gives good things to those who are fully resolved to him.

[3 : 50] Let me paint a picture of the kind of resolve that we encounter in the text. Let me introduce you to a young man by the name of William Borden.

He came from wealth, but he was best known for resolve. His family had immense fortune. He was a Chicago kid.

They had made their money in silver mining and graduating from high school. Get it. By the time he had graduated from high school, two things he had in his possession.

He was already a millionaire. And he had already become a follower of Christ. Borden went on to study at Yale, then at Princeton.

And as a young man who could do anything he wanted in the world, he left all the comforts that his standing could buy for the mission field. He wanted to go to northwest corner of China.

[4 : 55] This is back in 1904. And there's no idea why there's no idea why there's no idea why there's no idea why there's no in Cairo, Egypt. His resolve is best remembered by his biographer in the lines that were penned by Borden from Cairo. Here they are, no retreat, no reserves, no regrets.

In our text, we meet four more young people who demonstrate that kind of resolve. But beyond seeing that every generation has some who embody resolve, it's important for us this morning to see what it was that Daniel resolved. There is verse 8, let me read it again. But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food or with the wine that he drank. Therefore, he asked the chief of eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself. This was his resolve. It wasn't simply to complete a task or finish a work or accomplish some great goal in life. It was a resolve, there it is, to not defile himself. Remember, he allowed his new country to give him a new name because that had no impact on the internal makeup of his soul. But in this text, there was something that he encountered concerning the king's food that he decided, no, enough, not yet quite civil disobedience, but certainly a stubborn conviction. So what was it? It's possible that it was just whose food this was. I mean, this was the food from the table of the king of Babylon. And in the ancient Near East, fellowship at the table signified fellowship with one another. So some have posited that what would have defiled him was this relational confusion between him and his convictions and the king of Babylon who had different convictions.

If that's the case, then he was concerned about whose food he was eating. It could have been the use of the food that had been served. We also know that these ancient world orders sacrificed to their multitude of gods, and then they would participate by eating the foods which had been sacrificed. So in that case, it wouldn't be who was being associated with by the meal. It would be, no, these foods were dedicated to a different god of which I will not take part.

The most likely explanation though is not whose food or the use of food. The most likely explanation is simply the kind of food. This word defile has roots. Bible words have Bible meanings. And defiling food, well, as we saw last year in our own midst from the book of Leviticus, was foods that were distinguished from that which God's people were to eat because God was trying to put a picture in the world between things that are clean and unclean. And now that the world had become completely unclean, God says to Israel, I'm going to temporarily give you certain foods to eat and non-foods or non-eating foods so that there would be a distinguishing difference. People in the world would know there's something clean called

God and there's something unclean called the world in which we live. In all likelihood, this is the reason for which he said, I'm resolved. I'm not going to eat it. The king may be buying through his giving, but I'm not eating. There may be something provided for me here, but I'm not purchasing. [10:04] And so here he is, resolved. Now, there's a great difference, isn't there, between the people that are in the text and the people to whom I'm preaching. We live in a different time, a different place.

In fact, fortunately, when Jesus comes along, he begins to explain what was even behind this distinction of foods which you eat and you don't eat. He begins to distinguish between the external things that were given Israel and the ongoing things which were a matter of the heart. So in Mark chapter 7, Jesus gets to the heart of the matter on that which defiles us. And in a world that is still trying to keep all of the rules, Jesus says, well, do you not know that that which goes into you does not defile you, but that which comes out of you is what defiles you. He goes to the heart of the matter. That if you want to talk about clean and unclean, well, all foods are declared clean, but now the heart of the issue is what and how will you clean up your own heart. The things that come out of our hearts are those things which defile us. And Jesus went on to talk about sexual immorality, theft. Now, can I just say a word on theft? Someone stole pumpkins outside our planters that we had to replace last week. If you're here this morning, no, let's not go there.

Theft. It moves on. Jesus talks about things like covetousness. I want what they got. That's a defiling manifestation of a heart that isn't quite right. Deceit. Oh, how many times might I say something that gets me through, but isn't quite right? This is defiling. We actually defile ourselves. Given all the things that we have within us, Jesus talks about evil things, even slander. What comes from within is what defiles us, which is why when you want to talk about Daniel's situation in yours, you have to make that distinction.

His resolve was to not eat particular foods which distinguish the people of God from the world. Your resolve has to not have a heart that is bringing forth from your life things that no longer distinguish yourself as a lover of God.

[13:26] That creates a problem. I hope you sense the problem. I mean, where do you go to get a clean heart? This isn't just going in and getting a stent.

I need a new heart. I need a new heart. I need a prayer like creating me a clean heart. Oh, God renew a right spirit in me. If resolve is required, then a change of heart is needed needed because our resolve. Show me the strongest person in here this morning.

Our resolve is but weakness over time. How many times have we promised ourselves? I'm not doing that anymore until it's done. How many times have we told ourselves, I've got a goal and I'm going to reach that goal. And now it's on the ash heap of forgotten promises.

How many times have we said, I'm going to turn over a new leaf and realize we had to create a whole new forest. The heart, the heart of our inner makeup doesn't have the power in itself to live out a resolve that's here.

And so we need to ask ourselves, it's nice to know that resolve is required and even ought to be desired. But let's let's get real. How or where does this kind of resolve come from? Where are you going to get it?

[15:15] If the problem is internal, where do you go? And so this is where the Bible is very interesting. It begins to talk about an external righteousness that comes from God that ends up being planted into the interior makeup of our heart that actually gives us his spirit that allows us to

begin to operate, not with just grit and vigor, and decision making resolution, but with the freedom of a life that God is actually now altering little by little.

What I'm trying to say to you is we're not born with this kind of godly resolve, nor does resolve simply merge without being reinforced. What we need is the Holy Spirit that we need to change our heart from that which desires naturally all things that are defiling and give us something that beats that has underneath it the power of God to alter our actual desires, let alone the decisions that we make.

We need the Spirit. That said, I also want to say there are secondary influences underneath that hold up the root system. I was thinking about Daniel and his friends.

If you look at the biblical record of their age, probably between 17 and 20 years of age, by the time they arrived in Babylon. It means that they would have lived under certain kingships, even previous to Jehoiakim. In their preschool days and beyond, these were fortunate young men.

And Josiah was king of Israel. Josiah, it says, did what was right. Josiah emptied all the money he had and all the money he could find in order to reconstruct a temple for worship.

[17 : 58] Josiah then was given by those who were in the midst of a construction project, a book they had found called the scriptures. And it was Josiah who read the scriptures and said, oh my word, we're not living anywhere close to what the word of God says. It's Josiah in 2 Kings 22 and 23, who the Lord says has a penitent, humble heart because his heart had been inclined.

All of a sudden the reforms of Israel take place and lives begin to be orchestrated in a very different way. All because one man, God implanted in his heart the sensitivity of spirit that said, I need to be different, but I can't be. And God brings reform. These are the days under which Daniel would have been reared. Josiah who repairs a temple, recovers a law, calls for repentance, leads reform.

Josiah who returns God's word to the dissenter. He deposes the ungodly priests. He restored the celebration of Passover. And all the while in his household are the youths like Daniel who were being raised up to lead God's people. Let me get it straight. The kind of resolve we see in Daniel and his friends comes from the rich, fertile soil of a childhood under a great and godly leader.

Let me say something, church. The world is waiting on the church. The world is waiting on the church.

Think about what it is for you and for me. How to be raising children for God may be the most important business done on earth. The role of the parent as a secondary means by which our young people come to know who God is through the scriptures is absolutely essential. We need volunteers. We need parents.

If we need a generation of Daniels, we're going to need older people who know God to invest into their lives.

[20 : 24] You see, this text isn't just for young people and university students in our midst, although they most clearly identify with Daniels, it's for the older generations here as well. I mean really old.

Like Pastor Pace getting ready to have a big old birthday this next week. Old, old. Old, old.

Well, welcome to the club, my friend. Welcome to the club. You don't let me sing as I get the last word from here. Well, come on back.

Without the Holy Spirit, there will be no desire for you to become a person of resolve. But without the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, there is no substitute for all the defilements that come from us. So without the Spirit, we won't want it. Without the cross, we can't have adequate payment for our sin. Without faith and repentance, there'll be no new heart.

[21 : 40] Without a new heart, we cannot be revived. Without being revived, we cannot reform. Without any reform, this world is going to hell in a hurry because it's waiting on the church.

Daniel then lets us know that we need to get active. We need to raise ourselves, our children, our families, our community for God.

You know, there's an old Sunday school line, a song. I'm not going to do the song, although I could join later and be part of that thing.

I'm there to be a Daniel. I'm there to stand alone. I'm there to have a purpose firm. I'm there to make it known.

I dare you this morning to be like Daniel. I'm there to be a person that says, I'm done with lesser things.

[22 : 54] I'm done with lesser things. I'm done with lesser things. I'm done with lesser things.

There are other applications that could be made and should be made. How wonderful we've heard this morning of our university ministry, college students, young professionals.

We need you. I know the world needs you. The church needs you. The world is waiting on the church. We need men and women who emulate Daniel and his happy band.

Winston Churchill's autobiography, he regrets that he didn't have a great university education. But his regret was tempered by his own observation of how most college men and women in their undergraduate days, according to Churchill, wasted their time.

This is what he wrote. But now I pity undergraduates when I see what frivolous lives many of them lead in the midst of precious fleeting opportunity.

[24 : 13] See, we need to be crying out for the Holy Spirit to wash our souls from all the defilements that so naturally, easily, persistently come from within us.

And we need God to do a work in us, on us, long before he will be capable of doing anything through us. And yet this is the case.

We need this resolve. And I want to encourage you toward this resolve by telling you some of the good things that can emerge when resolve like this is had.

Look at verse 9. The first byproduct, outcome, result of a godly resolve was favor with his superior. There it is, verse 9. And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of eunuchs.

[25 : 20] This goes all the way through verse 16. This favor with his superior. His ability to navigate his life in a way that his superior gave him some bandwidth until it emerged that he actually was healthy and strong, even though he wasn't eating the king's food.

But it says there, and God gave Daniel favor. If you were here last week, you saw in verse 2, and the Lord gave. And at that time, the Lord gave comfort in the midst of hauling his people off to Babylon.

Now, and God gave favor, that is confidence. Confidence in Daniel to live according to his convictions and to seek a way through the world that he wasn't compromising his ability under the leadership of those who were over him, but nevertheless would not allow him to be defiled by the things that he held dear.

God gave. God gave. He was resolved. He made a good arrangement. He found favor. That's what I want to tell you.

A lot of people think, you know, wow, if I start actually resolving things for the Lord, if I'm fully resolved, then I've got no chance.

[26 : 47] I got no chance to gain the favor of those to whom I work for. And that may be true, but it's not necessarily true. And God gave Daniel favor, and he can give you favor too.

He can give you favor with an ungodly boss, a difficult neighbor. He can give you favor in a way where you're like, you know, I can't do this anymore, but I'm going to need God to help me through this.

And God gave Daniel favor in the sight of those that were over him. Resolve is required.

Positive outcome. Perhaps favor with your superiors. But even beyond that, he gave him facility in his studies.

Take a look now. Verse 17. As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom. And Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

[27 : 55] At the end of the time, when the king had commanded that they should be brought in, the chief of eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. And the king spoke with them. And among them all, none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

God gave them facility in learning and studies. And notice, again, that hidden thread now that is holding the whole chapter together.

Verse 17. God gave. All the way back to verse 2. And the Lord gave. Verse 9. And God gave.

Now verse 17. And God gave. He will give you comfort in the midst of your extremities. He might give you favor in the midst of your difficulties.

He could give you facility in all of your learning. Competency. Confidence. Comfort. Who doesn't want them? God gives them.

[28 : 57] He gives them to those who are resolved. So be resolved. In the strength of the spirit. By the substitution of the savior.

Who alters the desire of your heart. Imagine getting wisdom. Notice now, this is important. I'm not going to rush this one.

Daniel and his friends did not withdraw. From the culture of the world in which they had been planted. They didn't withdraw.

They didn't go found their own institution. They just stayed at the University of Babylon. And took a bunch of firsts. In different areas of study.

You know, the Christian community today. In some quarters. Withdraws. From the world. In an effort to be pure.

[30 : 01] And holy. And pious. Before God. But here what you find is. They just stayed where they were. And they excelled in what God had given them.

Now I love this. Because when I was a second year college student. I sat on the front lawn. Of a large institution. And listened to Charles Malick.

Who was actually. Ambassador to the United Nations. And he was dedicating a building on campus. And one of the things he said. Which struck me. Is that Christians generally.

Try to just go after the soul of the person. And they lose the mind of the person. And he says. If you just gain souls. But you don't gain minds. Then you don't capture where the culture is made from. And so what he said. Is there's two tasks. That was the title of his talk. Two tasks. We need to tell people about Jesus. And we need to engage in the thought.

[31 : 00] And life. And learning to the highest levels. That God would give us. Because if you lose the mind of the world. Well you've lost the soul of the world. So this is why we give ourselves to learning.

I had Mark Knoll as a history professor. He basically tried to reiterate the same ideas. Later in life I ran into Peter Brown. Now retired history professor at Princeton.

And Peter Brown has had such influence on me. Even in regard to the fall of Rome. And what were the causes for it. Was it this moral. Moral. Ineptitude that actually called for the collapse of Rome. And some people actually. No it wasn't that. It was the religious. The pious. The godly. Who took themselves out of the world. And therefore there was nothing less.

For the world to be strengthened by. I'm just going to tell it to you. God has you right where he wants you. It's an old cliché thing. Bloom where you're planted.

[32 : 06] Ask the Lord to give you facility in your studies. You need to be all in. You need to be resolved. In matters of purity.

But without a pious withdrawal. From humanity. And notice what it says. He gave them in a way. It says that down here toward the end.

He found them ten times better. Literally. Because we got a couple guys in here. That could probably read the Hebrew. He found them ten hands better.

Ten hands. In other words. Each guy. Could do the work of five people. On behalf of the government.

These were unique individuals. I want to be a ten hand kind of person. But God's going to have to give me facility.

[33 : 06] God's going to have to give you facility. And all of this actually typifies. What happens to Jesus. Later in Israel's history. When he's even a young person.

Really young. Like by the age of twelve. Still in kid's city. When Jesus was in kid's city. It says that he was growing in favor and stature.

With God and man. And then it goes on twelve verses later. And it kind of repeats the same line. Jesus at the age of twelve. Was growing in wisdom.

And so these bookends are there. And you know what story sits between the two verses of Luke 2.40 and Luke 2.52? Jesus at the age of twelve in the temple.

Demonstrating a facility with the word of God. That puts all of the teachers in awe of him. He was already passing up ten hands better. At the age of twelve.

[34 : 02] Because God was giving him. Had given him his spirit. Oh then the need for God's spirit. What I'm trying to tell you is that resolve is needed.

But God gives good things to those who are fully resolved. He gives favor. He gives care. He gives facility. And notice he will give decades of fruitful service to these men on behalf of society.

There it is verse 21. And Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus. From the first verse in the chapter until the last verse in the chapter. The writer wants you to know what God gave over a seventy year run.

Faithful service on behalf of the world he was living for seventy years.

Let me get it then. A person of godly resolve is the one who will end up being the most useful to God in the world. You want to be useful to God in the world?

[35 : 10] You're going to need godly resolve. While those who compromise, those who compromise their resolve to the world are in the end useless to God in bringing what the world wants and needs.

Proverbs 22, 29. Do you see a man skillful in his work? He or she will stand before kings. He will not stand before obscure men. Some of you here today, between the ages of 12 and 25, are going to stand before the most significant people this world can put on display.

And on that day, I pray you will remember this day when you said, Oh God, make me a man or a woman of resolve.

Make me useful to you by not compromising with the world. Jesus himself told his disciples that they would be brought before kings and rulers for his name's sake.

You know, sometimes we had five children when they were being raised. Lisa so wonderfully would orchestrate our dinner table as a place of love and devotion and care and nurture.

[36 : 32] But we didn't think we were just raising children. We thought we were raising future leaders. We prayed about it often. And she would actually, at times, say, you know, let me show you how we set this table.

Fork goes here. Little fork on the outside of that. Knife goes here. Spoon beyond that. Wow, you start sitting before kings.

You might even get ready for that little spoon that goes sideways at the top. And the kids would say, well, why do we need all this? We're just having pizza. Pizza. You would say beautifully because someday you might eat with a king.

See, this preparation of life to be a lifetime of service is what's so important.

But you've got to have resolve. Good. God gives good things to those who are fully resolved for him.

[37 : 44] Even if it's not guaranteed. I open with the story on William Gordon, his resolve. I read to you the famous words that he wrote from Cairo that his barryer for picked up.

Words of no reserve, no retreat, no regrets. But this part of the story I did not tell you. While he was in Egypt on his way to China, even before he had a chance to do anything, Gordon became sick. Soon it was evident to everyone, including himself, that he was going to die before ever arriving in China.

It was at this point that Borden said to himself, people will think, what a waste. My friends would have told me I should have stayed in New Haven.

But Borden did not think that way. As he lay on his deathbed, those words became his epitaph.

[39 : 03] Even so, no favor, no facility, no many years of lengthy service.

no service. He pens. No reserve. No retreat. No regret. Resolved. Our Heavenly Father, we need you to do a work in our hearts that we can't do without any of the things that we can't do without any of the things that we can't do.

We need you to do a work in our hearts that we can't do without any of the things that we can't do. On our own. On our own.

My goodness, Lord, we need you to even make us desire. Desire the things that are better than the defilements. Lord, we know that our love of the things that defile us are what keep us from being people of resolve like this.

So help us. We can do nothing but cry out to you to help us. But do it. Do it for ourselves.

[40 : 26] Do it for the young in our midst. Do it for the world in which we live. For they are waiting on us. In Christ's name.