

God Personally Cares for His People

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[0:00] Daniel chapter 1. In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

! 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.

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 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. Among these were some from Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

[1:19] The chief official gave them new names. To Daniel, the name Belteshazzar. To Hananiah, Shadrach.

To Mishael, Meshach. And to Azariah, Abednego. 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. Now, God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel.

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. Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, Please test your servants for ten days.

[2:19] Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. 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.

So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days. At the end of the ten days, they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food.

So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead. 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. At the end of the time set by the king to bring them in, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar.

The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So they entered the king's service.

[3:24] 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.

And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus. Well, good evening again. I want to speak to you tonight from Daniel chapter 1 about how God personally cares for his people.

It's something we need to be reminded with in the days that we live in with economic crisis. Two years ago in the Philippine newspaper, I was reading an article about the Global Peace Index. It ranks nations the safest and the not so safe. And Norway hit the top, but the Philippines hit number 100. It wasn't very safe to live in. And then to make all things worse, they had another article about it was the nation with one of the most corrupt leaders in Asia.

Now, ironically, the Philippines claims to be a Christian nation. They claim to be the only Christian nation in Asia, right? A Catholic nation. And so many Christians living there and they see the corruption that takes place day to day, week to week.

[4:33] They often joke about it and they often in their jokes reveal they think the politicians are in control of everything. They sometimes fail to remember that no, God is in control of all things.

And that's a lesson that we learn in Daniel chapter 1. God is personally caring for you even when you go through times of great difficulty and feelings of hopelessness in life.

We all can feel discouraged at times, can't we? There are many things in the last six months in this country alone that you can feel very discouraged about, very uncertain about.

Things that happen in our life. We talked about health problems earlier, Pastor John. There can be things in our nation, our church, our personal life. And we sometimes practically live like God is not in control.

We are living in a society with the economic problems, fear of unemployment, slowdowns. It is now becoming a reality in the life of God's people. We recently were in California and there are people there losing their homes.

[5:31] It's a terrible feeling to go through something like that. I cannot imagine the level of difficulty in people wondering, God, who is in control?

And the book of Daniel addresses these issues. There are people, again, we are reminded of today in our generation that are very skeptic in their view of who controls this world.

We are confronted on a regular basis through the media and through all forms of outlets like that, that, no, God could not be in control of this world. That is a silly thought, isn't it? It is a thought that doesn't reflect an educated thinking person.

And yet Daniel will teach us something very different. And Daniel is 12 chapters, the entire book. The first six are all historical. They're easy to understand. We grow up in our Sunday school classes learning about those first six chapters, but then 7 through 12 becomes a whole lot different.

All the visions and prophecies of Daniel. And I'm not sure that I understand even things in those chapters. But the point is, even though they're different in their content, every chapter, in my understanding, says the same thing.

[6:38] God is in control. It doesn't matter what's going on in the external circumstances of your life or our country or even the church. God is still in control. And that's a wonderful reminder that I hope encourages you this evening.

Now, the main theme, I think we mentioned it, in spite of appearances in the present, God is in control. And again, I reminded you this morning that when we came back to this country after four years, my wife and I felt like it was a more hostile nation in some senses, especially to Christian beliefs.

The culture wars that are going on here seem to be ratcheting up in their intensity. If you feel it here, I certainly feel it. And it's almost like this country is becoming the mission field, not the Philippines.

And soon, I wonder if we have to send missionaries to America because of all the things that are going on here. Daniel is a book that easily applies to all of us because whether you're going through a good day or a bad day, we need to be reminded that God is in control.

And some of us may be facing some uncertainties in our future. Maybe you're facing hostility where you work or through your friends or family. One question I want to ask to you is this.

[7:51] Are you compromising in any area of your Christian faith right now? Think of the last few weeks. Is there anything you are compromising in terms of integrity in your Christian life? Did you pay your taxes?

Did you pay them on time? Did you pay all of the taxes that you owed the government? Maybe some of you think carefully about that because Daniel chapter one is going to teach us about the importance of integrity, even in the midst of crisis in our lives.

Daniel corrects our faulty thinking, especially in corrupt nations like the Philippines, that a godly person can be successful and God can bless them, even in the most corrupt societies and most hostile cultures on earth.

And second, you don't have to compromise to be successful in life. As we think about that background, let me give you two points that we'll look at. The first is found in Daniel chapter one, verses one and two.

God still rules in times of destruction and uncertainty. And then we'll look at later on in verses three through twenty one. God still rules even when our faith is severely tested.

[8:56] He is still ruling. He's still in control. And I need that reminder in my own life. And I'm sure you can use it in yours frequently. Let's look. Firstly, God still rules in times of destruction and uncertainty.

First of all, God is still at work in times of war or peace. And for our days, we could say in times of economic prosperity or in terms of economic collapse. He is still reigning and ruling. And first of all, God can use unbelievers to punish believers. That's a principle we see in Scripture. It's here in Daniel and we see it throughout the Old Testament. We read about that in verse one and two earlier.

God sends Nebuchadnezzar and essentially he is judging his own covenant people because of their disobedience. And God sometimes uses unbelievers to punish his own people. We all know that Habakkuk, he had a little bit of a hard time beginning to understand that truth. God cannot be charged with sin because he can use just because he uses an evil person to punish his people.

[10:00] There's nothing evil about that. It's all under the sovereignty of God. And terrible events were happening in the life of Daniel. The city was going to be invaded soon and the country is going to be overthrown.

The government is going to collapse and people are going to be taken against their will to a foreign nation. Daniel isn't a seminary graduate. He's probably a teenager. That's something important. He has integrity as a young man of God. And he is facing great troubles in his life. And Nebuchadnezzar, it appeared to the external eye, controlled the ancient world.

He was the new superpower. He controlled the military. And it would be easy to think that, well, he is controlling everything. But we know that that could not be true. In spite of the appearances around the nation of Judah and the nation of the ancient Near East, the nations of the ancient Near East, God was in control.

God is the one that not only planned the invasion, he prophesied it through his prophets. It's Jeremiah 27, 5 and 6 tells us that. He says that Nebuchadnezzar, that passage says, is my servant, God says.

[11:08] The king of Babylon, I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. Maybe you have a footnote in your Bible. The year is 605 B.C. That's an important year in the ancient world.

605 B.C. In the ancient Near East, the great powers of Egypt, Babylon and Assyria, they're vying for power. Who is going to be the superpower to control the fertile crescent region of the world?

So back in 605 B.C., as this great battle comes to a climax, just before that, Pharaoh Necho, which I mentioned earlier in the sermon this morning, in 609 B.C., he experienced a crushing defeat.

I'm sorry, Judah experienced a crushing defeat. He is the one that killed godly King Josiah in battle. And the people back in Judah placed one of Josiah's sons on the throne.

And Pharaoh Necho didn't like that. And after three months, he replaced that 23-year-old son of David. And he placed a weakling on the throne. His name was Eliakim.

[12:13] And what did he do? He renamed him to the man mentioned in verse 1. He renamed him Jehoiakim to show his superiority over him. He had defeated him. And you may remember that in the ancient world, when a nation lost a battle, it was tantamount to say that our gods lost the battle.

It looked like the gods of Babylon had defeated the God of Israel because their kings were dethroned. We have to remember who is really in control in our passage tonight.

Chronicles and Kings elaborates more on that. We come to 605 and Necho was defeated. He himself is dethroned by the young crown prince Nebuchadnezzar.

And 605 was the decisive battle of Carchemish in the ancient world. It was the battle that turned the tide in the powers of the ancient world. And 605 begins to mark the first of three invasions coming into the nation of Judah.

And for 18 years, the people would experience foreign armies coming into their land, taking the smartest people away to serve in their pagan government and leaving the poorest of the poor in the land.

[13:20] You and I might be tempted to wonder, is God really in control of our of our world? What would happen if the United States goes through a great economic collapse? And you would be

tempted to think, I imagine, Lord, you still love us.

Are you in control of this country? Most of us have grown up fairly prosperous, haven't we? Who knows what may lie ahead in this nation or other nations of the world?

One thing seems to be certain is we just can't go on living in debt. Our nation is in debt for generations to come. How are we ever going to pay for that? Other nations effectively own us because of all the debt that our government leaders have got us into.

We know that in the nation of Judah, they ignored God's laws. They killed his prophets. They were ungrateful for all their covenant privileges. So God sends unbelievers to judge his people. Secondly, sometimes godly believers like Daniel, sometimes they can suffer because of disobedient believers. That's also a reality, isn't it? Here in the church, we are a covenant community.

[14:27] One sinning member, one sinning believer can have an impact on all of us. We are a community of the people of God. And so godly believers can sometimes cause suffering.

Godly believers can suffer sometimes because of disobedient believers. Innocent Christians are sometimes hurt by the sin of other Christians in the church or in God's community upon earth.

The very fact that we as parents often discipline the wrong child testifies to that. Our children can testify that sometimes they didn't do anything wrong, but they got blamed for it, right?

And that's the way we feel in this passage. Daniel is a godly man, but he is going to be affected. His whole life as a young teenager will be changed. He will go into exile, not because he was disobedient.

He is a young man of integrity, but he still suffers for the sins of the people in his nation. He is sent away into exile. Remember the book of Joshua, Achan.

[15:27] One man. One man violated the command of God and it caused the loss of lives and of a battle. And until that was taken care of, the nation would continue to suffer defeat.

And God brought judgment upon that nation. And King David, too, he commits adultery, tries to cover it up and has to commit murder, killing an innocent man. Uriah, again, trying to cover his tracks.

The whole nation and his family suffered for years because of his sin. It's a lie of Satan to think that I can live in secret sin. It has no effect on you as God's people. If you are living in sin, you've lost your integrity and you're hiding behind a false mask.

It affects all of us in the church of Jesus Christ. It affects the health of our churches when we don't live lives of integrity by the grace of God. I hope I never forget on a particular Sunday night when I was in seminary, I was sitting next to my classmate, a friend of mine.

And all of a sudden, at the end of the service, he was called forward. I didn't know what was going on. Maybe he's going to get promoted or something. He came up and confessed that he was unfaithful to his wife. I didn't even know this.

[16:39] And all this weeping and sadness impacted and tore his family apart. Those things can happen. Those are not unusual. The whole church suffers when things like that happen.

About six months after my family and I arrived to our church we're now ministering at in Manila, we found out that the senior pastor, the former senior pastor that had resigned, and he was working full-time in a Christian organization, traveling all over the Philippines.

We only saw him one Sunday out of every six or so. We found out that this 40-year-old man was dating a 20-year-old college girl in our church. He was hiding it from his wife.

He was texting her. They were going to dinner dates. All these things, giving her gifts. And the sad thing is, when I first came, I realized there were other leaders in the church that knew about it and wanted to cover it up.

That was my first great test in this church. Are you going to confront sin when it comes into the church? This man, it's a shame to see, coming to confess his sin before the church publicly in an act of discipline.

[17:41] And his young teenage daughter is looking at her father, confessing his sin. A man that led this church. His father was on the radio. A well-known name. And to think that this would happen.

And his own daughter can see the lack of integrity in her father. Daniel was a man of integrity. And sometimes godly believers can suffer because of disobedient believers in the life of the church.

And Daniel was one that is suffering in his life. Pray for all of us that are doing any kind of leadership in the church of Jesus Christ that we would not disqualify ourselves morally. Pray for your leaders here.

As we go on in our text, God is still at work in the present and the future. God knows what is happening in this world. He is personally involved in your present troubles, the present trials that you have in your life.

Again, remember, Daniel was probably just a teenager, a high schooler, or young college student in his equivalence of age. He's not living in a time of peace, is he?

[18:42] He's living in a time of war. People are dying. People are being taken away from their parents. And he is going to be taken from his home, from his parents. Nebuchadnezzar takes the smartest, the healthiest, most intelligent people out of the nation because he's going to train them for nobility in a pagan land.

Daniel is going to go through some great changes in his life, and he's not going to compromise his faith. His situation is far worse than any Christian I've ever met in my life. The things that he went through at that young age and the integrity that he has as a believer in the true God.

I'm sure he faced many temptations. Maybe he just wanted to give up and forget that he was a Hebrew. Have you ever met a Christian that just wants to give up serving the Lord because it's just too hard?

Remind them of Daniel. Daniel went through enormous trials, and he doesn't give up. He continues serving God even when it's difficult, even when it's uncertain in what he is facing.

God was personally caring for Daniel in his life. Maybe you're here today and you're faithful to God. You're facing some great difficulty in your life.

[19:53] Many people that we've met in our furlough are facing difficult situations with their family members, with finances or health. And there's a tendency in our lives to think that our trouble is bigger than God.

And we don't want to think that way. God is always bigger than our problems. He is personally active, and he cares for us. Some of you remember Bruce Ray, that pastor out in Washington, just went through cancer surgery.

Wife lost her job. That's just one of several stories that we've heard about coming back here and visiting many churches. God is personally involved in your present struggle.

Secondly, God is personally involved in your future uncertainties. All of us have many future uncertainties, don't we? Who knows what Bremen will look like in ten more years? It may be a very different town.

I don't know. God is actively involved in not just our present problems, but the things we think about, our plans in the future. Daniel was facing terrible uncertainty as he's taken away from his home.

[20:55] He's never going to see his parents or his homeland again. And yet he knows he can trust in God. I think at least 10,000 Israelites were deported in 605 B.C.

Verse 1. That's a lot of people to lose. In the Philippines, when the people get educated and they leave for another country like America or the United Kingdom, we call that the brain drain. You get a good job and you get out of there because you can make a better wage in another country.

You cannot make that in the country that you love. We should also remember that in verse 2, the name Shinar in my translation comes up. Maybe you had Babylon. Shinar is the old name of Babylon.

It's found in Genesis 11, 1 through 9. That's the place in Scripture that often characterizes people living in rebellion against God. Daniel is not going to a homeschool convention.

He is going into a pagan land. He is being forced against his will to move to a pagan nation that doesn't believe in God. And here he is, a young man, and he demonstrates great wisdom and integrity in his life.

[22:00] It must have appeared that God was defeated to the average Israelite that wasn't trusting in God. All of their precious temple vessels were carted off and taken to Babylon. Some of them were cut up.

What do you think about that? Who was in control? My friends, if it was hard enough for Adam and Eve to obey God when they were sinless, how much harder is it for us who are fallen in Adam to trust in those promises that God knows the future?

He is concerned about the concerns you have, your future employment, and all the things that you may face in life. It is something that my wife and I have come to love in the Philippines, a precious faith of poor people trusting in God to pay their telephone bill or to pay a little bill like that. That is just something that brings me great joy. There are so many ladies in our church whose husbands are unfaithful. They're not Christians. These ladies are some of the most faithful people in prayer meeting, and they have little resources in life, and they're often giving us bread or cookies out of the little resources that they have, and what a testimony they have to stand up and say, I'm praying for something as simple as paying my telephone bill. Isn't that wonderful to see Christians still believing, still trusting in God, even when they're living on meager resources? Well, those are some things we can consider tonight in those first two verses. [23:24] Secondly, in verses 3 through 21, God is still ruling, He's still reigning, even when your faith is severely tested. Your faith can be severely tested.

First, I want you to remember in verses 3 through 7, we already read that, always remember your Christian identity. Always remember who you are in Jesus Christ. The world wants you to forget who you are in Christ.

They don't want you to remember that you're a Christian and that you're a distinct person on the face of the earth. They want you to conform to the thinking patterns of this world.

They want you to conform to the way they think. And Nebuchadnezzar, I should say, is probably a little bit smarter than Pharaoh. Pharaoh tried to use brute force to cause the people to be subjected to his rule.

However, Nebuchadnezzar, he used assimilation, rewards. Those people that went to his university and did well, he rewarded them, didn't he? He promoted them and gave them government positions to help serve his large, expanding nation.

[24:28] And assimilation is one of the best tactics the world uses even today to affect the minds of our young people, especially as they go off to college. Daniel received a free education at one of the great universities of Babylon.

He was the best, he was the brightest. in one of his group of people that he lived with in Judah. He's carted off for three years and he's immersed in the culture, the wisdom of the Chaldeans.

Judah suffered the loss of many great people during those days. And I think Daniel would have had many opportunities to compromise his faith if he wanted to. He's in a foreign land.

He's away from mom and dad. He could do what he wanted to do, couldn't he? He's never coming back. He could have compromised quickly. And I'm sure many of the other Hebrew men compromised as you read through the whole book of Daniel.

Many other Hebrew men probably bowed down to the statue that Nebuchadnezzar had built. But Daniel, he's not going to compromise by the grace of God. And again, college is such a critical turning point in the lives of many young people, whether they're Christian or not.

[25:36] They go to college and they may be mentally prepared. They got a high score on their SAT and they're ready to go in. They're excited. And after the first couple of years, they're being influenced by the teaching, the antagonism of their professors, trying to challenge them, the credibility of our Christian faith.

They laugh at the idea of miracles. And if you're really intellectual, you could not accept the biblical account of creation. I mean, come on now. That is scientifically impossible.

And right there in the classroom, they are challenged by professors who essentially mock our Christian beliefs. They are taught that sexual orientation is just a lifestyle choice and a whole host of other issues.

I've been so encouraged on this furlough to run into and meet college students that are living for Christ on campuses. They are making a stand in the classroom respectfully for their professors. Just a few months ago, we talked to a young man named John who studies at the University of California, San Diego. And the professor was mocking creation in the class. Couldn't ever happen.

[26:43] John raised his hand and he respectfully asked if he could reply to his professor's objections to the biblical claim of creation. And John, I think, even wrote a paper, submitted it, and his professor apologized.

And you know, after he was done speaking, a young lady taps her shoulder on the back of John's shoulder, taps her finger on the back of John's shoulder and says, I'm a Christian too. Thank you. If you're a young person and you're attending a college that isn't going to promote the Christian faith,

then don't be fearful to take a stand for what you believe in.

A public stand by you could help another weaker Christian in helping them to strengthen their faith. Our young people are almost threatened if they don't conform to the thinking of our world.

They can be fearful to speak out. And I pray that God would bless our young people today not to compromise when they go into the college classroom. That is really a far more serious war than the war on terror.

The cultural war for ideas and the rejection of Christianity is cutting the legs out, the faith out of many young people in this nation. And so let's pray for our young people.

[27 : 53] In the Philippines, sad story of a young lady who was enrolled in college, she joined a sorority. And one of the requirements if you want to join the sorority is you've got to sleep with a guy from the frat house.

And she did that. Well, she gets pregnant and guess what? You've got to drop out of school when that happens in the Philippines. You've got to take care of that baby. She essentially ruined her life in those early years.

She can't graduate. The guy left her. There's nothing that can be done. And in a moment, in just a single night, she compromised what she claimed to believe in. And it has implications for the rest of her life.

So brothers and sisters, let us pray that God would help us wherever He has called us in life not to compromise that we would be men and women and young people of integrity.

Daniel didn't forget who he was. He may have been far from home, but he knew that he was a believer in the God of Israel. So I would encourage you to pray for our young people, whether they're in high school, whether they're in college.

[28 : 57] They are facing some enormous pressures, things that I never had to face in my generation. They're going to face complex issues in bioethics, mercy killings, and so on.

They're going to have to interact with their professors and write papers and things like this. Let's pray that they would stand firm in their faith and that God would bless them even in pagan environments like that.

We mentioned earlier this morning about the common problem in the Philippines where they work abroad to go to another nation to earn a living. They can send money back to their families.

And many people end up going to Saudi Arabia and the Middle East. And they live there for a couple of years. They send money back each month. And in one true story of a Filipino man that went there, he is in the Middle East and his boss, an Arab man, is planning to go to Mecca.

If you've ever watched anything on television, Mecca, you can only go there if you're an Islamic believer, correct? This man was a Christian, claimed to be a Christian. He was a driver for a very wealthy Arab man.

[30 : 09] And so he compromised his faith and for just a period of time became a Muslim. And then he would confess his sin once he got home from his trip. Now friends, things like that, you better prepare to lose your job if you face something like that.

Many Filipinos become nurses and they go all around the world. They must be prepared to lose their job rather than perform help in an abortion procedure. Those are things that young people will face today.

Things like that. There are Christians living who have compromised their faith and they feel terrible about it. And if you know someone that has done that, assure them that God can forgive them.

And there is mercy in Jesus Christ. When we are baptized in the church, we effectively take the name of Christ upon us and we, it's like your Christian badge, a policeman's badge after graduation. Baptism is our badge. It identifies us as a Christian. And yet Daniel in his day, Nebuchadnezzar tried to change his identity. He tried to change it by giving him a new education, a pagan education.

[31 : 13] He tried to change his character by giving him a new name. He took away his name, didn't he? Gave him a pagan name. Daniel submitted to his pagan name.

His name, Daniel, meant God is my judge and it's taken away and now he's given a name probably in honor of some Babylonian deity or God. How would you like that if your son or daughter had to face something like that?

3 John 3, 4 says this, I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. I think every pastor of every good Christian church in the world rejoices when members are walking in integrity in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I am so thankful when I hear about members in our church that are growing and learning scripture and growing in Jesus Christ and yet many times I stay up at night or I'm awakened at night thinking about unrepentant members in our church and I'm confident that your pastors struggle with the same thing.

You're living in sin, you're being stubborn and you are not conforming to the will of God, you're probably keeping your pastors up at night. I think about it all the time and sometimes I get up in the morning and I'm tired because I know that there are people in our church that are hearing the word of God and yet they aren't doing what 3 John 3, 4 says.

[32 : 33] They're not doing what Daniel is doing in his life. They're compromising in their lives. Some Christians, it doesn't take an invasion by Nebuchadnezzar to defeat them.

All it takes is the alarm clock going off in the morning. That scares them and they can't go to church. You ever met someone like that? The alarm clock defeats them. Oh, I'm tired. I can't go to church today.

What a simple, simple way to be defeated to give up in the Christian life. There are Christians like that today. Charles Spurgeon, the story goes of his grandfather had a church member and the church member was living in sin.

He was in a tavern. I think he was drinking and practically drunk maybe. I don't know. Charles Spurgeon, a young man, just a boy, walked into that tavern and said, you're breaking my grandfather's heart. You're breaking the heart of your pastor.

And I think that's how any pastor feels when people in the congregation aren't walking in the will of God when they're compromising their life. You're keeping them up. You're burdening their souls as they pray for you.

[33 : 37] And so, encourage your fellow members to continue walking in the truth to live lives of Christian integrity. Another point to consider tonight is protect yourself with the knowledge of God's Word.

Put it up here in your mind if you have to do it. Memorize Scripture. That helps protect you in times of temptation, distress, or trials. Daniel's name is taken away trying to re-educate him, indoctrinate him.

The same thing happened to Joseph. His name is taken away and he's given a pagan name. Forced to study in the University of Babylon. He was forced to study but he would be rewarded if he did well.

He would be a future diplomat in Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom. Again, must remember that Daniel was far from home. He could have compromised probably whenever he wanted to compromise and yet if he did it would affect the rest of his life until his old age.

He's a young man here and he hasn't compromised in our text. I believe he hid God's Word in his heart. I don't know if he had a copy of Scripture but he went to a foreign nation and maybe he had much of it memorized in Scripture and the recalling of the promises of God.

[34 : 49] Daniel is a model of integrity and wisdom to us today. Never forgot that he was a Hebrew. He may have worked for Nebuchadnezzar but he belonged to God.

So many people even unbelievers in our world. One moment of compromise ruins their life. A few years ago there was a marine in the Philippines who was accused of raping a young Filipino lady. He was sitting in a steel container for a couple of years outside the U.S. Embassy. He practically ruined his life. Remember the story of Eliot Spitzer the former New York governor a brilliant man who just in a moment of compromise his reputation and career gone and those men aren't believers.

How much more worse is it to hear of a Christian who compromises something in their life his or her life and the ruin that that can bring upon a family upon a man or a woman is tragic.

We take vitamin C to help us prevent getting colds. We exercise to stay healthy. The word of God hiding it in our heart is something that God uses to protect our souls when trouble comes.

[36 : 04] And finally in verses 8-16 never compromise your Christian faith. All of us without Christ have compromised I've compromised and you have compromised. I don't want to just preach a moralistic sermon tonight to remember there's hope in Jesus Christ.

Daniel was able to do what he was able to do as a young man of God because of the grace of God. But something that we can appreciate in this text is that you can cooperate without compromising in this world.

Daniel did a lot of things and they were not compromising his faith. He took a pagan name. He didn't argue about that, did he? He did things in terms of education. He submitted himself to the Babylonian system of education.

He wasn't compromising his faith. All of us need to remember that external legalism and rules sometimes that we create as Christians we sometimes call compromise what is really cooperation. I grew up in a home that had a lot of legalistic rules and there are all kinds of things you couldn't do as a Christian. but I've come to realize that that isn't necessarily compromise it could be termed cooperation.

[37 : 10] Daniel submitted to all of this up until verse 8. He didn't object to a pagan name. He didn't object to pagan education. So why does he make a stand over food is the question. That is something that he would not do in his life.

He believed that would defile him. Let's survey some of the options here that are given by commentators. Why does Daniel make food the issue to take his stand in integrity?

Well some people have spoken a lot about the Daniel diet. Have you ever heard about that? This is somehow a secret hidden diet tucked away in Daniel chapter 1 that is really a heavenly miracle diet and if you do it you can cleanse your body of toxins and cure your body.

I don't think that's why it's there. If it works for you tell me. But another opportunity or interpretation is that Daniel was objecting to food that wasn't kosher.

Food that wasn't according to the Mosaic system of dietary laws but I don't think that exactly hits the answer for us this evening. According to Hosea 9 and Amos 7 everything all the food in captivity was unclean.

[38 : 18] It was all polluted from that perspective. So I don't think it was just because it wasn't kosher. Second some people believe that Daniel refused to eat this food because it was offered to idols.

that may be true I don't know but wouldn't the vegetables also be offered to idols too? He ate the vegetables but he would not eat the meat.

I think it's important to realize that Daniel's test here over something that is an issue of integrity was only temporary. His abstinence from certain foods was just temporary.

We know from 10-3 later on in the book 10-2 and 3 that after another king had risen Cyrus of Persia he once again went through something like this where he abstained from wine, meat, and the rich king, the royal king of the food.

But it implies that he went back to eating all that. So I don't think it was because it wasn't kosher. It wasn't because it was offered to idols. I think the point in a particular commentary that I enjoyed is simply this.

[39 : 18] Daniel knew that if he ate the inferior food and yet if he could still succeed before Nebuchadnezzar he would know and his friends would know the Hebrew friends that God was the one that gave him success.

It wasn't Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar would take the credit. He doesn't know about this diet does he? And yet the day they would stand before the king and when they would be granted this high degree of success Daniel knew that God was in control.

In the midst of all the uncertainties of his life he came out healthy, strong, smarter than the rest and he wasn't eating the royal food of the king 115.

He rejected the king's special diet. It was an inferior diet and God sustained him in those three years of training. Another reminder that God is the one that grants us success in life.

It isn't King Nebuchadnezzar and all of his brilliance of planning and promoting. God was the one that was sustaining Daniel and his friends. Daniel even allows Nebuchadnezzar to take the credit but quietly he knows in his heart that God is the one that sustained him during these years.

[40 : 29] Another lesson we learn as we come to a close this evening is that when we appeal to those in authority we should appeal to those with respect not rebellion. That's another great lesson from Daniel chapter 1.

Daniel like Joseph is a wise man. He knows how to appeal to a particular plan in his life that he wants to have happen and it doesn't happen the first time does it?

He isn't granted his appeal when he first makes his appeal. In the Philippines when the president does something wrong or when some government official does something wrong that's a corruption charge they stage a demonstration in the streets.

They hire people to come with banners and flags and they have a protest and they call for the ouster, the removal of the president. Daniel doesn't do that does he? He doesn't form a rally protest in this passage.

He must have quietly prayed for God and in wisdom asked for another solution. How could I approach these guards? And in patience he performed another strategy.

[41 : 35] He didn't panic and he didn't get angry. He simply used another strategy and he is an example of a wise man in scripture trusting in the sovereignty of God even when things weren't going his way.

God and so he went back a second time and the appeal is granted. And for the next three years Daniel ate vegetables to the glory of God and God sustained him.

God has given him success. But he is a model for how we children in your home you can appeal to your parents with authority and respect and they might listen to you for your employment.

Maybe you have a manager or someone over you a supervisor that is being unfair to you.

respectfully appeal to them. Don't get angry with them. Don't fight with them. Respectfully appeal to them and ask God to give you wisdom as you appeal and make your case.

Daniel is a wonderful example of someone who spoke I think with grace and respect. And then in verses 17 to 21 God will reward your Christian integrity. God can reward you in his time.

[42 : 39] Faithfulness in small things prepares you and I for faithfulness in greater things. Daniel when he went into the Daniels den that wasn't his act of heroism was it?

He was an old man at that time of his life. Daniel chose to draw the line about integrity at the dinner table when he was a teenager. He knew that that was something that would determine the course for the rest of his life and he didn't compromise in his young years.

He fought his battle at the dinner table first and that sustained him in the lion's den years later in his life. He was faithful in small things in his life. He had integrity in the small issues of life.

A subtle test of his faithfulness to God especially in times of crisis. And I pray that God would help all of us in our lives to be faithful in even the small areas of life in our Christian testimony, example in our families and in our communities.

God can continue to bless you. He can cause you to excel in your life, in your calling. He can prosper you even during an economic crisis if he chooses to. And then we must remember that all of our success comes from God.

[43 : 54] Every success that we have in life, it isn't because we're smart people, it is because we serve a gracious God who has given us gifts to do well in our lives as Christians.

And Nebuchadnezzar tried to change the name of Daniel but he couldn't change his character. And you can endure many things in your life, you can endure many changes that are not compromising, but our Christian character is important before God.

All of our success comes from God. At the end, verse 21, is a summary of Daniel's diplomatic service. The year is 539, 66 years later from verse 1.

And Daniel served long after that into another nation. He was a man of integrity, a man of God throughout all the days of his life. As we conclude this morning, I think we need to remember that this passage of Daniel says in Daniel 1.19 that they had to stand before the king at the end of the training, didn't they?

You are going to stand before a king too. And I will stand before a king. It's not going to be Nebuchadnezzar. If you're here, you're without Jesus Christ, you have not yet believed in the gospel, you're going to stand before a perfect king, Jesus Christ.

[45 : 06] And you are going to be evaluated on a perfect standard of righteousness. And if you are without Christ, you are going to stand before him naked, undone, and trembling before he casts you into hellfire forever.

We are going to stand before a king. And I'm here to remind you that there is a righteousness that is not your own. The robe, the royal robe of righteousness that can be covered and wrapped around you so that you can stand before that king on that great and final day.

How do you get that robe? By submitting to Jesus Christ, believing the gospel, repenting of your sins and believing the promises that he can save you and that he alone is your savior, redeemer, your Lord, and he will be your robe of protection as you stand on that final day.

Daniel wasn't perfect as he stood before Nebuchadnezzar, but he was blessed, wasn't he? Daniel needed that covering as well. And how sad it is that centuries later, Jesus Christ, who was perfect,

he was the perfect king.

He stood before an evil king on earth and the evil king condemned the righteous king. And Jesus Christ was condemned although Daniel was pronounced successful.

[46 : 23] And when Jesus hung on the cross, even his father condemns him so that you and I might experience and know the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Christ. And as believers, as we stand before the great king on that day, I trust that God you will hear the words in your ears, well done, my good and faithful servant.

Enter into the joy of your rest. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your son, Jesus Christ. We thank you for his robe of righteousness which covers us.

The Lord, which prepares us to stand before the awesome presence of the king of kings, of all eternity. Lord, you blessed Daniel in his life as he stood before King Nebuchadnezzar.

Lord, I pray that you would prepare us, prepare us as Christians to live lives of integrity so that we will stand before you in the righteousness of Jesus Christ and we will hear in our ears, well done.

And Lord, I pray that you would bless the believers in this church, encourage them as we face uncertain days ahead. May we always remember that you are in control and that you care for your people.

[47 : 34] And Lord, we pray that you would give us the grace to praise you for your providence, whether it is dark or whether it is joyful and bright. Lord, we ask all these things in the name of your son, Jesus Christ.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. may may! may Thank you.