

## **The Courage of Daniel**

### **Daniel 1:8-10**

**May 3, 2020**

8 But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the royal rations of food and wine; so he asked the palace master to allow him not to defile himself. 9 Now God allowed Daniel to receive favor and compassion from the palace master. 10 The palace master said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king; he has appointed your food and your drink. If he should see you in poorer condition than the other young men of your own age, you would endanger my head with the king" (NRSV).

### **Introduction**

I love the prophecy of the Old Testament and I love to study, preach, and teach the book of Daniel. In order to better understand Daniel we need a basic understanding of the Exile. I find that a lot of Christians do not know much about the Exile. Israel experienced it's golden age during the reign of king David. He ruled fairly and had a deep respect for the Lord. When he died his son Solomon took over as king. He started off good but ended up bad. He had many political marriages that eroded religion and he burdened people with heavy taxation. When he died, his son Rehoboam became king but he was even harsher on taxation and the kingdom split with ten tribes in the north forming the nation of Israel and the remaining two tribes in the south forming the nation of Judah. This split caused the empire to weaken significantly both physically and spiritually. The Exile began when the Assyrians invaded and destroyed the northern kingdom. About a century later the Babylonians invaded the southern kingdom. They capture Daniel and his friends and took them to Babylonian as slaves. Now the slaves have various roles from hard labor to domestic servitude. However, Daniel and his friends were considered to be special. They were young, gifted, and came from distinguished families. They had no physical defects, were handsome, and smart. So, they were set up for a special position desired by the king for his royal court. They were assigned to a three year training program for the king's diplomatic service where they learned Aramaic, science, and diplomacy. They were also assigned the best food in the land. It's a daily ration of the king's choice food and wine. The problem that Daniel encountered is not the wine itself. I want to emphasize this because there are some segments of Christianity today that take liberty with misinterpreting this passage in order to support their own agendas of prohibition. The problem was not wine and the problem was not food. The problem was that it had been offered to idols. This was forbidden and this brings us to today's Scripture.

Today's Scripture shows us one person that is strong and remains faithful while most everyone else is complacent. We can see other examples of this in the Old Testament. We can see other examples of this in the New Testament. And it just so happens that also in our world today most people are complacent. That's because human nature remains the same. There are different people, different times, and different cultures but still it is a few that remain faithful while the majority are complacent. One of the common lessons of the Bible is a characteristic of Bible heroes who stand alone on faith based principles. They are loyal to God in spite of the opposition and obstacles. Daniel, like other Bible heroes, is different from everyone else in his environment. He makes a stand. This is faith conviction. He makes a strong stance based on his faith. This is extremely risky. What is going on here is a slave is going against the generosity of the king. You simply do not do that. He is determined not defile himself with the royal rations of food and wine because they have been offered to idols. Daniel honored the laws of God over the laws of the government. Notice the character of Daniel. He talks to the boss; the palace master. He is not a rebel. He does not protest. He handles the situation with diplomacy. The palace

master cautions Daniel "the king has given the goods to you because he wants you healthy, when he sees you are not healthy it's going to be my head."

The Bible lesson provides encouragement when facing difficult situations. The Bible is loaded with examples of people who had it a lot worse than we do who remained faithful and made a positive impact. The book Daniel provides a hero as a role model that is faithful and excels due to his faith conviction during difficult times. God blessed Daniel with wisdom and a very rare skill of dream interpretation. The point is not that Daniel has these unique skills and wisdom. The point of the Bible is that these are given to Daniel by God. If we take a moment to reflect we can recall that earlier in the Bible Joseph was also blessed by God with wisdom and the unique skill of dream interpretation (Genesis 40 - 41).

I'm sure you've heard of peer pressure, or the herd mentality, where most of the individuals follow everyone else in a group. Social pressure, the fear of being wrong, and the fear of isolation makes it difficult to go against the crowd. People find comfort in knowing they are with the rest of the group. Now imagine you are Daniel. Everybody else is going along with the program. Nobody dares make a stand against the wishes of the king. You are young, the people you might look up to are older and they are all going along with the program because no one dares to go against the king. You are a long way from home, in a foreign land that is intimidating, with different language, culture, and customs. Your home has been destroyed. There is no support at all, nothing to fall back on, no one to come to the rescue. You are a young defenseless slave and you decide to make a stand against the wishes of the king. This takes tremendous courage and conviction that comes from faith and loyalty to God. Daniel was a person that put God first. David had tremendous courage because Daniel was focused on pleasing God above everything else including his own safety and well being.

We are faced with difficult times of uncertainty, fear, and discomfort. When we look into the Bible we see scattered throughout the Bible, from the very beginning to the very end, many Bible heroes who faced difficult situations that were much worse than we are. They remained loyal to God in spite of the difficulties, challenges, and setbacks. Stay faithful. Focus on your blessings. When you are faced with a challenging situation, have the courage of Daniel who remained and excelled during difficult times due to his faith conviction.