Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

An Uncompromising Life
Scripture: Daniel 1:1-8
Code: 27-03

We go, I trust, with a great sense of anticipation to the book of Daniel. I want to read the first 9 verses as the setting for our message tonight. Chapter 1.

“In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god.

“And the king spoke unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king’s seed, and of the princes; youths in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skillful in all wisdom, and gifted in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king’s palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king’s food, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end of them they might stand before the king. Now among these were the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego.

“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s food, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. Now God had brought Daniel into favour and compassion with the prince of the eunuchs.”

We’ll stop there. That’s not the end of the story. That’s only the beginning. But for the end you’ll have to come back next time.

We live in a day of compromise. In fact, I believe that from the time we begin our life in the world, we pretty well learn the art of compromise. All the way along our life, we go the line of least resistance. We hold a conviction until it gets in the way of our comfort or our ease. We have a standard as long as it doesn’t violate something we wish to do. If we can get by with a little less than our best, we’ll do it. If we can cheat a little on the divine principles, or even the principles we say we believe, we’ll do that, too, in many cases, if it accomplishes our goals. And that is a very personal approach to life that finds itself a very world perspective on life, because all of us as individuals living that way make a

whole world of compromise.

Frankly, expedience is the ruling standard of human life. We worship the great god pragmatism. I suppose our motto today could be, “If it works for you, do it.” We are pragmatists more than anything else. And since in our society today we have abandoned any moral standard, we have cut ourselves completely loose from Christian principle. We no longer are concerned for a biblical morality. We could care less about what God has to say, at least for the most part. We are left with only the philosophy of expedience, or pragmatism. Whatever works, whatever accomplishes your goal, whatever gains your end, that’s what you do. And so we easily give up our consciences. We easily give up our convictions. We easily let go of our standards to gain some practical end. And the amazing part of it is that our society seems to have little conscience left, little sense of guilt or remorse at all.

We find out that politicians, who seem to have such high standards, who at the time when they are to be elected, hail from one end of the country these great standards, but when they find themselves in office, are eager to compromise those standards if it gains their ends. We find the same thing true in business practices, as corporate executives all the way down to people who are salespeople do the same thing. Lawyers, who should be the conscience of any society, will compromise their own consciences if it gains a certain end in many cases.

Leaders in all walks of life and in all areas of human concourse will do the same thing very often. As individuals of all shapes and sizes, we learn to lie, and we learn to cheat, and we learn to steal, and we learn to shade the truth, and we learn to do whatever is necessary to get what we want, so that compromise becomes a way of life.

And when we get into a confrontive situation, sometimes our greatest principles are shoved into the background because we don’t want to offend somebody, or we don’t want to be obtrusive, or we’re afraid to really speak what we believe. Perhaps in the life of a Christian it’s nowhere more obvious than when you stand in the midst of conversation where you know you should speak of Christ, but rather than be thought evil of, or be thought less of, you keep your mouth closed and you are silent about Christ when He should be brought up. That in itself is a compromise. For the salvation of our own ego, for the sake of our own goals, we readily compromise.

And compromising standards and compromising truths has found its way into the church. In fact, we have compromised with the world so repeatedly, we have compromised with the world so often that frankly, folks, I think we don’t even understand what the compromises are anymore. Whenever the world comes up with something, we invariably will follow along. If the world wants to have a kind of a hippie movement, we’ll have a Jesus-hippie movement. If the world wants to have a rock-music movement, just give us time and we’ll have it, too. If the world decides to have a women’s lib movement, just wait and we’ll have one.

We have so long compromised with the world, we have become so engulfed in its materialistic viewpoint, in its economics, and its style of life that there is little possibility that we can even understand what an uncompromising life really means. We fight to be separated from the world, and yet we are unable to define what that separation means because we've been so brainwashed by the system.

We have accepted the world's thought patterns. We have accepted the world's value systems. We have accepted the world's attitudes. In so many cases, we have accepted its economics. We are indulging ourselves. We have accepted its morality. And again, we are indulging ourselves. And even though we know the Bible teaches something, if we feel we want to do it, we go ahead and do it anyway.

Recently we had an occasion to have some people come in for counseling who desired to be married. And we found no biblical justification for their marriage, counseled them that they really had no right to get married, which didn't faze them in the least. They simply went down the street, got married, and showed up here again the next week.

Compromise, an inability to deal with the biblical data as God intends us to deal because we are overwhelmed with our own personal desires. And so we substitute ourselves as the one to be pleased rather than God, and we learn well the art of compromise. We indulge ourselves in the world's priorities. We take stock of the world's entertainment, and on and on it goes.

Scripture calls upon us to do just the very opposite. And we could spend a lot of time just studying this from a theological perspective. We could go through the Old Testament and we could study the very call of God to be separate from the world. We could go into the gospels and see what Jesus said. We could go into the epistles and we could study it there. But it doesn't really need to be done, other than to simply say from one end of the Bible to the other, the whole approach of God to His people is that we are to live apart from the world. It's just the whole message of God to His people.

When God designed the nation Israel, He built right into their very daily living, the way they dressed, and the way they ate, and the way they conducted themselves in a daily routine, and the calendar for the year, He built in safeguards to prevent them from intermingling, as it were, with pagans. He's done the same for all of His people. We have a standard that really can't be compatible with the world.

And yet, how easily do we compromise. How easily do we abandon our absolutes. How easily do we allow our character qualities to become faulty as we seek to please ourselves under the pressure of the system in which we live.

It might be well to remind ourselves at the very beginning that God is the uncompromising God. God never compromises an absolute. God never compromises a principle. God never sets aside a truth for expediency purposes. God always lives according to His word. In fact, He said, “I have exalted My word above all My name.” In other words, He says, “I Myself, as to My nature, make Myself submissive to My word.”

We were preaching this morning on the subject of prayer, and prayer is important. But I’ll tell you something that’s more important than prayer, and that is the study of the Word. Because if you do not study the Word of God, you will not know how to pray because you will not know what is God’s will. The study of the Word is more important than prayer. Someone told me this morning that an old saint of God said if he had to live his life all over again, he would pray less and study more because it would filter out needless prayers.

The Word is the basis of the integrity of the life of a believer. And God as the Holy One has exalted His Word above all of His name and brings Himself into commitment to that very Word, and as His children, we are to do the same.

I want to just share with you one passage from 2 Corinthians chapter 6 before we look at Daniel, and then another one from Hebrews, to give you an insight into this. In 2 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 17, I think you have a summary of New Testament teaching relative to this kind of separation. It says, “Wherefore come out from among them,” - “them” referring to idolatrous people, people connected with Satan, infidels, unrighteous, people in darkness, the unregenerate world, - “come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and do not touch the unclean; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

Now listen, God is the separated, uncompromising One, and He says His people, to truly manifest that they are His people, must also be the separated, uncompromising people. When we compromise with the world, it has devastating effects in two areas. First of all, it affects our worship, Hebrews chapter 13. When we compromise and accept the standard of the world and set God’s standards aside, it destroys our worship.

Let me show you this. Hebrews 13, verse 12, a tremendous passage. “Wherefore,” Hebrews 13:12 says, “Jesus also, that He might set apart” - or separate, that’s what “sanctify” means - “that He might separate the people with His own blood,” - that is, to separate them from sin – “suffered outside the gate.”

In other words, you remember that in the sacrificial system of Israel, when it was time to slay the lamb for the sins of the people, those sins were symbolically placed upon another animal and that other animal was taken outside the city, outside the gates, separated from the people. And Jesus is simply

drawing on the simple idea of separation. When He died, He died separated from the city, outside the walls, outside the concourse of human society. He died separated “In order that He might purchase a separated people.” That’s the whole point.

Then in 13 it says, if Christ separated Himself to purchase a separated people, “let us then go forth therefore unto Him outside the camp, and bear His reproach.” In other words, let’s then live separated lives. If He died separated to purchase a separated people, then let us live a separated life. “For we have no continuing city here, but we seek one to come.” And when we’ve done that, “by Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually.”

In other words, you can’t even worship unless you are living a separated life. Don’t come to God with your praise, and with the fruit of your lips saying thanks, and with your good deeds, and your sharing, and your sacrifices unto Him, unless you come out of a separated life. That’s the whole point. We are called to be separated.

John put it this way: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

James put it this way: “Don’t you know that friendship with the world is enmity against God?” You cannot be the friend of the world and the friend of God. We are called, then, to a separated life. And if we are not separated, it destroys our worship.

Secondly, it destroys our service. It destroys our service. We can’t serve the Lord. We become useless. In 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 20, it says, “In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but of wood and earth; some to honour, and some to dishonour.” That’s probably true in your house, isn’t it? You’ve got the old stuff, you know, the stuff with the chipped apples on it, and the plastic stuff, and all the mix and match stuff that everybody in your family gets? And then when somebody important comes over, you pull out the good stuff, and all the kids say, you know, “How come we never get that?” That’s typical. We all have that. And we have, you know, the everyday stuff that we eat with, the utensils, and then we have the very fine silver that is only for special occasions.

Well, so it is with God. In God’s treasure house of utensils – skeuos, it’s a word meaning any kind of utensil - there are things unto honor and some unto dishonor. Now, if you want to be a utensil that God can use, then purge yourself from these. From what? False teachers, false teaching, and the false kind of living of their lives. Separate yourself from unholiness. Flee youthful lusts. Avoid the foolish and unlearned questions that breed strife. In other words, separate yourself from false teaching and false standards and false ways of living, or you cannot be a vessel fit for the Master’s use.

Now, beloved, what I'm saying is this: God calls us to separation, and unless we are living a separated life we are destroying our worship and we are destroying our service to Him. There must be a purging and a purification in our lives.

A yacht was sitting at anchor one time on the Niagara River. And all of a sudden, because the water was rushing rather rapidly, and the wind was blowing, and there was a small kind of a little upheaval on the river, the rope holding the boat to the dock broke, and it began to drift in the current, and it happened that there were people on board the small yacht. They became panic stricken as it went rapidly toward Niagara Falls.

Some of them were accusing each other and screaming at each other about the fact that who was to blame, and why did you get me on this boat, and on and on it went. They could hear the thundering sound of the falls immediately ahead of them. What was the skipper to do? Well, he was a man of action. And according to The Chronicle, he had a piece of dynamite in his boat. He simply embedded it in the hull and lit it and blew a huge hole in the middle of the boat which proceeded immediately to sink the boat. Once the boat was sunk and no longer moving, the people were readily rescued as they clung to it in rather shallow water.

I suppose that's what has to happen in our lives too. Somewhere along the line, as believers, we have to scuttle the ship of compromise. We have to sink the vessel of worldliness or we're going to find ourselves rapidly moving toward a disaster.

That's what God calls us to. That's the standard by which we are to live. And none other than the Lord Jesus Christ is our pattern. In chapter 7 of Hebrews, verse 26, it says, "He was a high priest who was fitting" - Listen – "because He was holy, He was harmless, He was undefiled" - Now listen to this – "He was separated from sinners." He is the pattern: holy, harmless, undefiled; separated from sinners. God calls us to such a life. God calls us to such a commitment.

Moses, you know, made that commitment to a separated life. In Hebrews 11:26, it says of Moses: "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ, greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of reward. By faith Moses forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing One who was invisible." In other words, Moses chose God over Pharaoh. He chose heaven over earth. He chose poverty in God's will over riches out of God's will. He chose the will of God rather than the treasure of Egypt.

Ruth made a commitment like that. "And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave unto her. And she said, Behold, thy sister-in-law has gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister-in-law." In other words, Ruth clinging is told, "Go back to your former life; go back to the pagan gods."

And Ruth said, “Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me. And when she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.” Ruth said, “I will not return to a former life. I am committed to God and since you represent Him, I am committed to you.”

David made the same commitment. In Psalm 119, David said, “I have sworn, and I will perform it, I will keep Thy righteous judgments.” In verse 115, he said, “Depart from me, ye evil doers:” - get away – “for I will keep the commandments of my God.”

Moses wouldn’t compromise, Ruth wouldn’t compromise, and neither would David. Barnabas, that lovely man of God who we see in the New Testament, so instrumental in the life of the early church, in Acts 11:23 says of him, “When he came, and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.” Barnabas told the early church to be uncompromising and to cleave to the Lord.

But there’s no better example of the character of an uncompromising spirit than Daniel, so let’s look at him. And by the way, Ezekiel, who was a contemporary of Daniel, must have felt the same way, because when Ezekiel wanted to give a list of the great men of righteousness in history, in Ezekiel 14:14, he said they were Noah, Daniel and Job. And he put Daniel right in the middle, even though the other two were long dead and Daniel was alive. Rarely does a living man receive that kind of honor. That usually must await his death.

Daniel was a great man, a righteous man. We’re going to see why in the first 8 verses as we look at it tonight. Beginning in verses 1 and 2, we find the plight, the plight. And we’ve already looked at these verses so we don’t need to spend a lot of time on them, just to briefly read them and make a comment or two.

“In the third year in the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah” - Judah was the southern kingdom – “came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god.”

Now, we spent two lessons, two hours of teaching at least, on those two verses. I simply want to remind you that the book begins on a very sorrowful note. What we find there is the first of three movements in the Babylonian captivity. The northern kingdom is long gone into captivity, and now Judah, the remaining people of Israel, have been unfaithful, disobedient and so their judgment has arrived.

Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon who now, for all intents and purposes, rules that whole part of the world, comes against Israel or Judah, besieges it, and takes away the captives. So, in this series of three deportations, the first one occurring during the time of Jehoiakim, the captives are taken off to Babylon. And so the book begins with a sorrowful note.

And you can't help but think back how many times God had warned the people. God, I told you, warned them in three ways. Number one, He warned them through the prophets, constantly preaching if they didn't repent they'd be judged. Secondly, He warned them by the Assyrians, who invaded their country and put tremendous pressure and each time God delivered them, but they got a little taste of what it would be like to be under foreign oppression. But they never heard the prophets and they never learned from the Assyrians.

And finally, God warned them by taking the northern kingdom into captivity. They should have learned when they saw what happened to the north, but they didn't learn from any of those things. And so, they continued in their sin, and God was patient, and merciful, and gracious as long as He could be, and the same God who said in Genesis 6, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man," stopped striving with Judah, and brought judgment, and they were taken to captivity.

Now, in the first deportation came Daniel, his friends, and another whole group of young men that are indicated in the passage. We meet them down in verse 7 – 6 and 7 - and we'll get to that in just a moment.

But, the whole idea here is to set the scene. Daniel is taken captive. The whole nation hasn't gone into captivity yet because God wants Daniel there to get him set up for when the rest of the people show up. Now verse 2 tells us - just an interesting note - that when Nebuchadnezzar did this first siege and actually defeated Jehoiakim, and it might be interesting to add this point that when he defeated Jehoiakim he never dethroned him.

He had seen that in the past, Jehoiakim had been a willing vassal to Pharaoh in Egypt, so he figured Jehoiakim was a weak enough person to just leave him there, and that he would be intimidated enough not to do anything. So, he just left Jehoiakim alone, let him kind of sit it out.

But in order to prove his power, he stole all of the vessels of value out of the house of God. He literally robbed the temple, took all the things of value. Why? Because if you could steal things from the god, or gods, of a foreign power, you could prove your greatness.

If their god couldn't defend them any better than to hang on to the stuff in his own temple, you didn't have to worry about him. So, conquerors that conquered nations invariably gathered all the riches of the temple of the gods of that nation and hauled them back to their own country to affirm their power

over false gods, foreign gods.

And so, Nebuchadnezzar gathered all of this up, and it says he took it into the house of his god. There are so many names for who his god was that it's almost impossible to know, but it seems as though the main gods are related to the god Bel, which is also related to Baal. He sometimes comes under the name of Merodach, and sometimes under the name of Marduk, and it just goes on and on. They could never get their theology straight, and they were always scrambling everybody up anyway. Whoever his god was, into the treasure house of his own god he took the vessels of the temple.

Now, the reason I think this is indicated to us is to show how total the coming doom was going to be. God wasn't even defending Judah anymore. God's own temple could be robbed and God didn't put up a fuss. The defense of Judah was over. God had defended them against the Assyrians. God was no longer defending them at all.

You know, this must have been a hard time for Daniel, too. Even 70 years later, after Daniel's deportation, 70 years later, in the sixth chapter and the tenth verse, when Daniel prayed, he faced Jerusalem. Seventy years later his heart still longed for the city of Jerusalem. You can imagine what must have gone on in his heart at the very time he was taken captive. So, the plight, a captive people in a foreign land.

Now, let's look secondly at the plot, the plot. From the plight to the plot, verses 3 to 7. This is absolutely one of the most fascinating parts of the book, and it sets the stage for everything that's going to come to pass in Daniel's life there.

Now, I told you a moment ago - and you want to get this, this is historical background - that when Nebuchadnezzar first besieged Jerusalem, right in the middle of his operation, he got word that his father was dying. So, he just left it as far as it had gone and he had to go back to Babylon to take care of the situation in the death of his father. He therefore left Jehoiakim in power. Now mark this. He left him in power.

But in order to be sure of his loyalty, in order to be confident that Jehoiakim wouldn't pull off some kind of a rebellion and overthrow whatever minimal force Nebuchadnezzar left, he did a very smart thing. He took hostages. The first deportation, then, was not really a mass deportation of the people of Judah. He was simply taking hostages until he could get back in 597 and do a whole thing on them, and finally in 586 and wipe out the whole nation. Verse 3 tells us what he did.

"And the king spoke unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes." Now, he wanted hostages, and he wanted hostages right out of the royal family, and hostages right out of the princely nobility of the land of Judah.

By the way, the word spoke, “And the king spoke,” in Hebrew is actually the word “commanded.” The word “Ashpenaz” some people feel is a proper name, and this is a man named Ashpenaz. Other people feel that this term means a title, referring to somebody who is a master, or somebody who is a leader, or somebody who is an overseer. Whether it is a title or a name is not really important. For our sake, we’ll just accept the fact that it’s a name. It’s a lot easier to deal with him in those terms. So, the king commands this person Ashpenaz, and it tells us that he is the master of his eunuchs.

Now every king had people who worked for him or served him. In the court of a king there were eunuchs. Basically, a eunuch was a person of whom Isaiah says - it could be said that he was a dry tree. In other words, he had gone through a surgical emasculation to render him a eunuch. Those kinds of people were then placed in the control of harems in specific duties within the royal setting.

It also is true, and we want to stress this so that you’ll understand it clearly, that because commonly eunuchs served the king, the term “eunuch” became used for a lot of people who served the king who were not necessarily surgically made into eunuchs. The word, then, could refer to somebody who had had that physical operation, or it could refer to someone who just served the king.

In fact, Potiphar is indicated as a eunuch in Egypt and we know that he was married and had a wife because we happen to have an encounter with Joseph and Potiphar’s wife. So, in the case of Potiphar, he may have been designated as a eunuch who was not really a eunuch physically. But Isaiah’s definition does indicate the physical part of being a eunuch.

Now, whether Daniel was actually a eunuch physically or not is difficult to know. It would seem to me, and I think I mentioned this in the past, that it’s very likely that the king would render these young men eunuchs when they enter into his service, and that might explain in some fashion why Daniel never married. There’s never an identification with a family; all his life he finds himself serving the king.

Whatever the case, this man Ashpenaz was the master of the people associated with the king, eunuchs in a physical sense, eunuchs in the sense of service to the king. So, this man then is told - and we want to get straight who he is because we’re going to meet him again - this man has an important office. The word “master” literally equals the word “prince.” He is to collect these young men.

Now, some historians have indicated that there were somewhere between 50 and 75 of them, at least. There happens to be, apparently, some data that they can put their finger on to indicate that it was a relatively large group; 50 to 75 may be a good guess - young men. Notice, they were the children of Israel. That doesn’t mean the northern kingdom because by now those in the north, some of them, had migrated to the south from the 10 tribes before the holocaust in the north, so that all of Judah really embodied the seed of Israel.

So, some of the children of Israel who are “of the king’s seed, and the princes,” royal family and nobility. He wanted the best for hostages in order to make sure Jehoiakim didn’t do anything he shouldn’t do.

Secondly - now watch this - Nebuchadnezzar also wanted to train these young men in his courts, in his palace, to assist him in administering Jewish affairs because already in his mind he had concluded that he would be making Judah a vassal state to Babylon. He was going to capture the world, and he was going to have to know how to handle these Jewish people, and so he wanted some well-trained Jewish boys that he could literally melt down and re-form into Chaldeans, but who had a Jewish background so that he could use them in the manipulations he felt would be necessary to administer his rule among the Jews.

Look at verse 4. It says not only were they to be of the king’s seed, and that would be the royal family itself, and the princes, that would be the nobility in the court, but they were to be “youths,” yeledim in Hebrew. And it’s very hard to define this word exactly, but most commentators agree that they could be no older than 17 years old and probably no younger than 13 or 14. And so Daniel, at this time, is a teenager.

We know that 70 years later he is still ruling. He is still leading in Babylon, and so he must have been very young at this time. These are young men, then, somewhere between the ages of 13 and 17 or so, and it’s likely that Daniel maybe was either 14 or 15 years old, no older than that. Hang on to that because that’s a fantastic thought. This is just a kid, just a teenager.

Plato spoke of education of the youths in Persia as that which began at 14 and ended at 17. Babylonian customs would probably be very similar. And so, they were looking for a training period to make Chaldeans out of these Jewish boys.

Now, I want you to see what kind of boys they wanted, really interesting. Verse 4, “In whom was no blemish.” The word in the Hebrew is mum, and it means a “physical blemish.” They didn’t want anybody who had any physical handicap. They wanted a flawless physical specimen. It’s talking there about the health of the individual.

Secondly, notice, it says “well favored.” Now, that had to do with their face, their good looks. Basically, mum probably refers to their body and its physical abilities, and “well-formed” having to do particularly with the face, although it could also include the physical form as well. They were looking at the physical characteristics.

This is typical. When Israel went to choose a king, which one did they pick? The tallest and the handsomest guy in the country, Saul, and what a loser he was. It’s typical - looks. Get us the best

looking, the best shaped, well-formed, virile, handsome young men. We don't want anybody with a blemish physically or facially.

And not only physically, but how else does the world evaluate people? First, their physical features, and secondly, their brains. The physical and the mental, that's really all the world has to go on, and so that's where they go from there. "Skillful in all wisdom." They have four intellectual qualifications here.

First, "skillful in all wisdom." That means superior intellectually, highly intelligent, with an ability to make distinctions, ability to make decisions, the ability to apply truth to situations. They wanted guys who were really superior intellectually.

Secondly, under the mental, "gifted in knowledge." That means superior in education. They had the right data. They had the right learning. The literal Hebrew says, "knowers of knowledge" - those who had information, who were good students, who were well educated. So they wanted those with education and those who knew how to apply that in terms of making distinctions and decisions.

Thirdly, they wanted those who understood science. And apparently, this Hebrew term has the idea of the ability to correlate. First, to know facts; secondly, to apply facts; and thirdly, to correlate facts, to bring lots of things into harmony and make decisions. In fact, that's essentially what science does, doesn't it? Science draws conclusions from the correlation of data. They had to be able to think in terms of correlation.

Finally, "and who had ability in them to stand in the king's palace." Now this had to do with a third dimension of the things they were looking for. First was physical, no blemish and well-formed; then was mental, skillful in all wisdom, gifted in knowledge and understanding science; and third was social. They had to have the poise, and the manner, and the social graces to stand in a king's palace and not come off like a klutz.

Now, I'm telling you, this - I'd never make it. In the first place, I'd get disqualified in every category. But if I ever did get past the first two - which couldn't happen – I would never make it in the third one because whenever I get into some very important situation, I always do the wrong thing.

I remember when I was in Dallas, Texas, not long ago, and someone called up and said, "We want you to have lunch today with such and such a lady. She appreciated your message. She wants to meet you, and we're going to be having lunch at the top floor club for the oilmen of Dallas, and you're to be the guest of this lady." And I said, "Terrific." And Sam Ericsson was with me. I said, "Come on, Sam, and you can come, too."

And I didn't realize what a big deal - and here I'm bringing Sam along, you know, like it's my party. So, anyway, I was busy during the day, and I just threw on a sweater. I had been studying and just threw on a sweater and went out the door. I was just going to have lunch with this nice lady. And we went in this elevator. We kept going higher and higher, and I thought maybe we got in the rapture in the middle of the ride. Finally, we got to the top floor, and I walked out; and I'm telling you, this place was something else.

And you just feel funny immediately. You feel conspicuous, like your shoes are bad, and your pants are wrong, and you're - there's something really bad, your hair, you know, your ears aren't in the right place, you just - you feel - you feel funny because everybody's staring and - and there was a lot of "Ahem - ahem - ahem. Yes sir? Were you looking for someone?"

"Yes, I'm supposed to meet," and I gave the name. And the guy just kind of looked me over. And this dear lady came out and she said, "Oh, it's nice to meet you." And I didn't know what was wrong. Well, I found out that you can't go up that elevator without a coat and tie. And so the man went in the back closet. He said, "I think we have a coat you can borrow."

And he went in the back closet and got me a 48 short. That's true; I looked at the label. It was up to here and out to here. And, I mean, I think it had been - it had so much stuff spilled on it, it was incredible. I sat through that whole meal, in the middle of this oilmans' thing, with my 48 short coat, trying to pretend that I had social grace. Man, was I out of my element - give me McDonald's; at the best, Carl's, you know? I wouldn't have made it.

When the world looks for people to fill its bill, it looks at their physical, their mental, and their social definition. That's it. Because that's all they can understand. They didn't know anything about character. They didn't know anything about spiritual quality. They didn't know anything about virtue. They didn't know anything about morality. They said, "Get us the smartest, and the best looking, and the most suave young guys you can find. And we're going to melt them down and remake them into Chaldeans." That was the whole plan. It was a plot, folks – listen - to brainwash these young Jews. It was a brainwashing plot, clear and simple. They were going to do a number on them.

What was their purpose? At the end of verse 4, "That they might teach them the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans." Now, "the Chaldeans" is a term used interchangeably with Babylonians. Originally, the Chaldeans were a separate group, but as the Babylonian Empire grew and the Chaldean astrologies, and the Chaldean learning, and the Chaldean sciences dominated the Babylonian Empire, the term "Chaldean" became synonymous to "Babylonian." And so, they were going to make them full-fledged Babylonians, or Chaldeans. They wanted them to learn the learning of the Chaldeans.

What is the learning? By the way, the tongue, or the language, of the Chaldeans was a very, very powerful and important language in that day, and the Jewish people would not know it, and so they would have to learn it, but it would give them intercourse around that part of the whole world because the language dominated that part of the world.

Beyond that, the learning of the Chaldeans is very interesting. In the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, it tells us that the learning of the Chaldeans comprised the old languages of Babylonian, the two dialects of Sumerian, and a certain knowledge of Kassite, which seems to have been allied to the Hittite language. And there were other languages of the immediate neighborhood. In other words, they would literally become linguistic experts.

Further, the Chaldeans had knowledge of astronomy and astrology. They had a sophisticated mathematical system involving a sexagesimal system of numeration. They had a certain amount of natural history. They had a huge store of mythological learning, including legends of the creation and the Flood. They had, likewise, a tremendous plurality and plethora of gods, a whole pantheon of deities. They had a tremendous knowledge of agriculture. They were, perhaps, the finest architects in the whole world, as many of the celebrated buildings of Babylon show. You might be interested to know that in the building of the hanging gardens of Babylon, and in the building of the palaces, they had a sophisticated air-conditioning system at that time, which they had developed.

So these young men were going to be exposed to all of this learning. Whether it was architectural, or agricultural, or linguistic, or theological, or historical, they were going to become erudite Chaldeans. The Chaldeans were also expert in magic, in sorcery, in certain enchantments, in omens and incantations, and prayers, and hymns, and myths, and legends, and science skills. They were expert in glass making. We know that. And on, and on, and on. And these young men were going to learn all of that. This was a brainwashing process.

You know something? It’s not unlike what universities and colleges are set to do to young people today. Take away their faith, rob their heritage, re-form them with the godless, atheistic, humanistic, socialistic information that so fills their books and the minds of their teachers. Sending your young person today to a college or a university is not always doing them any favor at all, but exposing them to a brainwashing process. Sadly, even the seminaries in our country that once held up the Word of God, who now have abandoned it as the authority, are brainwashing people to believe that human answers tell us that we can’t trust God; His Word isn’t true. Another brainwashing process.

Moses, you remember, when he was in Egypt, in Acts 7:22 it says, “He was taught in all the wisdom and all the arts of the Egyptians.” But you know something? There are some people that you just can’t corrupt. You just can’t do it. And such people we’ll meet in a moment.

The universities and the seminaries of the Chaldeans were going to destroy everything that Daniel and all of his friends knew of God and of the heritage that God had placed among their people. They wanted them to forget God, forget the truth of God, wipe out everything of the past. Believe me, people, this is the effort of modern education. From the time your child goes off to school, except for God-fearing teachers and people that love Christ that intersect with your children, they will get a humanistic, godless, atheistic system of values that is geared by Satan to whitewash God out of the picture and to render those minds brainwashed to serve Satan. That's the plot.

The plot thickens in verse 5. "And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's dainties" - delicacies, meat, food. The word here means "delicacies." It isn't just the average stuff. I think the RSV rightly translates it "rich food." So, they were to get a portion of the king's rich food. Now why? Why feed them the king's food? Man, I know I lived in a dorm for awhile. Any king that ate that stuff would have abdicated his throne long before. What are they feeding them that for? Is that a part of the education?

Listen, one of the most basic elements of brainwashing is a sense of obligation, is to make them feel obligated, is to provide for them a provision that is lavish so that their sustenance is dependent on you and you build a dependency for provision. You build a perspective on life where they demand what you're giving them and then you've got them locked in. You know, "How you going to keep them down on the farm after they've seen Par-ee?"

Feed them the Chaldean food and just see if they'll ever eat the crummy vegetables and the water they're used to. Seduce them by the appetites, and make them feel obligated because of the provision, and lift their standard of living up to where you want it to be so they can never go back to that other kind of approach. All part of the brainwashing.

The king himself was a smart man. Nebuchadnezzar was a brilliant man. And he appointed this situation and he gives Ashpenaz a command to feed those people the king's delicacies and give him the wine the king drinks. Now, they drank wine of all kinds, but the king's wine would be the very best wine, the best. For three years, it says, so that at the end of the three years they would stand before the king. They'd come in and say,

"O king, man, are you a good guy. Wow! Look at us, king, we are so healthy. We've been eating all that good stuff for three years. We've had a terrific time."

And the term "stand before the king" has reference to serving the king. Did you hear that? Serving the king. To "stand before" means "to serve." We find that over and over again. It says the angels stand before the throne of God doing what? "Waiting a commission to serve." Jeremiah the prophet stood before God waiting to move out in service. He says, "I want people who will serve me, and I know they'll serve me if they're obligated to me. I know they'll serve me if they depend on my kind of stuff

and my standard of living."

Have you ever had a taste of that kind of stuff? Have you ever just gone somewhere and just lived it up for about two or three days, or maybe one day? Or somebody took you to some restaurant, you know, and it cost you about $50.00 and you just got a little taste of that and you thought, "Boy, you know, I could get used to this? This is the way I deserve to be treated."

Well, that's the whole idea of the brainwashing. That's the trap. And apparently - you want to know something? If there were 50 to 75 young men who were taken in, it must have worked with about 71 of them because the only ones we meet that didn't fall prey to the brainwashing process are four of them, just four.

Verse 6. "Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah." Notice, "among these." That means there were many more, and among them only four, only four. There aren't very many people in the world who resist the world's effort to brainwash. There aren't very many people who won't buy the world's bag, who won't dance to the world's jig. There were only four. And you know what they did? Verse 7, "Unto the prince of the eunuchs gave names: Daniel he gave Belteshazzar; Hananiah, Shadrach; Mishael, Meshach; and Azariah, Abednego."

Now, you know what happened? They changed all their names to Chaldean names. That's another part of the process of brainwashing. You forget your roots. You forget your heritage. You forget your family. You forget your past when you forget who you really are. You don't have any identity anymore. You've just lost your identity.

I remember for so many years I was always introduced as Dr. Jack's son. I was nobody. I was just Dr. Jack's son. If there was no Dr. Jack, there would have been no me. That's really true. But I'll never forget one day, somebody said as they were introducing me to a lady and said, "Oh, this is Dr. Jack's son." She said, "Oh, Dr. Jackson, it's so nice to meet you." I was Dr. Jackson, whoever Dr. Jackson is. I wouldn't mind being Dr. Jackson if I were Dr. Jackson. Cutting people off from their heritage is not new and it's common even today.

I was reading this week a book about a Dr. Hong who very interestingly enough was raised in North Korea. This very unique man raised in North Korea - in fact, I met him this last week, watched as his whole family was tortured when North Korea was invaded by the Japanese. They came in. They cut the thumbs off his father. They killed his grandmother. They murdered his brother. In fact, they hung him in their doorway of their house. And one of the things that they did all over North Korea when they first came in was they changed all of the Korean names to Japanese names, to cut them off from all sense of identity. This is part of the brainwashing process, and that's what they did.

You might be interested to know something about the names, because I think this is - by the way, I might add that they changed Joseph's name, remember? He was given an Egyptian name when he went to Egypt. I think it was something like Zaphenath-Paneah, or something. And you know, do you know a lady in the Bible by the name of Hadassah? That's the true name of Esther, her name was changed, too, when she came into another society. That's what they did very commonly.

All right, Daniel. "Daniel" means "God is judge." "Belteshazzar" means "Baal provides." Bel, "Bel provides"; or it could be "Bel's prince." So, they changed him from Yahweh, God to Baal. Wipe out God, see?

Secondly, "Hananiah" means "the Lord is gracious." They changed Hananiah's name to "Shadrach." "Shadrach" is some kind of a derivative from the god Akku, from which we get the word "Marduk." It's all so tangled up, but another one of the chief deities of Babylon.

"Mishael," by the way, means - and I love this - "who is what the Lord is." Isn't that great? Who is like the Lord? They changed his name to "Meshach," again from Mesha-Akku, which is "who is what is Akku is"? Akku, by the way, is supposed to be the moon god.

"Azariah" means "the Lord is my helper." They changed it to "Abednego," or "servant of Nego," or "servant of Nebo," and Nebo was the son of Baal.

So, in every case something in all those four names represented God. It says something about the fact that they must have had godly parents, which may be why they stood out among the rest, because it was only a remnant of believing people in Judah, anyway, and of all of the young men that were taken, maybe there were only these four who had a godly heritage. They certainly had lovely, godly names. But in every case they stole away God from their names and substituted their pagan deities. They were trying to blot out God. They were trying to substitute their own demonic pantheon, all part of the brainwashing.

I see that in our society. Boy, I see Satan working to brainwash our young people, to educate them in the things of the world, to draw them off into the allurements of the world, to get them to eat the world's meat and to play the world's games, and most of them go.

That brings us to the final thought in verse 8. We're just going to introduce it tonight. From the plight, to the plot, to the purpose - the purpose. And this changed everything. The key to the uncompromising life, verse 8, just the first part: "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's food, nor with the wine which he drank." Stop right there.

Daniel - listen to this - this guy is fourteen years old. He "purposed in his heart," literally, he laid it on his heart. There were three distinctly heathen things that had happened to these young people:

heathen wisdom was to be taught to them, heathen names were to be given to them, and heathen food was to be fed to them.

Now, the first two they accepted. They went on with the heathen training, learning their education, and it wasn't all evil. They had many scientific things, and many very helpful principles of architecture, and science, and so forth. They allowed themselves to enter into their kind of training, and sometimes in our society, in our world, we have to go in for the training that our world offers, and we have to know how to sort the good from the bad, the true from the false. And so, they did not fight against that educational process.

Secondly, they didn't seem to be bothered by the heathen names they were given, because you could change their names but you couldn't change the fact that their names as they originally were were written in God's book as His children. You could change their names, but you couldn't change their hearts. You could change their names, but you couldn't change their souls.

But the third thing is where they drew the line, and they said, "Nope." Daniel said he would not defile himself. And the word "defile" means "to pollute, or to stain with an ugly stain." He says, "I will not stain my life. I will not pollute my life with the king's food, nor will I touch his wine."

Now, wait a minute. Well, Daniel, what's the big deal? I mean, why would you say no to the food and yes to the education? It would seem like the education would be more powerful than the food. No. I don't think so. I don't think so because it's the eating of the world's delicacies that much more rapidly corrupts us. It's the entering into the world's lifestyle that pollutes us, much more than the world's thinking pattern. And he was willing to acknowledge that there were some good and bad things to be learned, and he had what it took to filter those out.

But, there was more than that. It wasn't just a simple logical decision. Let me tell you why he decided the way he did. Listen, there was no strict prohibition, get this, in the Word of God. There was no strict prohibition against taking a heathen name. There was none. Second, there was no strict prohibition against learning what some other people had to teach. There was, however, very strict prohibition about what a Jew could eat and drink, true?

Now, listen, this is the point of the whole thing. Daniel drew the line of no compromise in his life on what the Word of God said. Did you get it? What, then, is the character of an uncompromising life? It is a commitment to draw the lines in your life where the Word of God draws them. Do you see? That's where Daniel drew the line.

Now, listen, he couldn't eat the king's food for two major reasons. Number one, it wasn't kosher. They had dietary laws. Jewish food had to be prepared a certain way. The blood had to be drained off a certain way. There were clean and there were unclean animals, right? The Babylonians had no such

thing. Do you know that they literally feasted on pork? They thought pig was a delicacy, and they ate meats forbidden to a Jew, and the cooking preparation was not fitting for a Jew, and now you can see something of the purpose of God's dietary laws, can't you? Because in this case it kept some wonderful young men from getting corrupted. That was God's intention for it, to restrict the possibility of intermingling with pagans.

But, there was another reason that Daniel couldn't take of it, and that is because the Old Testament again and again said not to tolerate idols, not to tolerate idolatry of any kind, not to have anything to do with an idol-worshiping people. And listen to this, the king's food, served at the king's table, was always connected with the gods, for we know from Babylonian history that the food they ate was first offered to the gods, and the wine they drank was first offered to the gods, and all of it was given, as it were, to the gods, symbolically, and then they ate of it.

And if Daniel and his friends were to eat of that food, they would be eating that which had been offered to gods, and they would be literally participating in a pagan feast. They couldn't do it. They took their stand on the Scripture. Where there is a specific, biblical mandate, you draw the line.

Someone asked me this morning, "Do you take a stand on things?" And I said, "Yes." "How do you evaluate?" In light of the message tonight, it's easy for you to know. He said, "How do you evaluate what you will take a stand on?" I say to him and I say to you, "Where the Scripture draws the line, I draw the line, right there." If there is a clear word from God, that is the character of an uncompromising life. He would not defile himself, he would not be stained, he would not be polluted by disobeying Scripture.

Now, listen to this. He had every reason to do it, every reason. Just think. First of all, he was a kid. What kind of character do you find in a 14-year-old? Not often that kind. He was just a kid. Not only that, he was away from home. There was nobody around to check. Mom wasn't going to be behind the corner with a coat hanger. Dad wasn't going to be around the barn with a belt. Nobody was going to say, "What are you doing, kid?" He was on his own.

Not only that, the king was the king, and the king made a law and he probably learned to obey authorities. Not only that, if he wanted to advance in the kingdom, which every young man might want to if he had that kind of quality, he would have known he had to do what the king said.

Further, if he disobeyed, the king would be very angry and it didn't take long, as you read the book of Daniel, to find out when he got angry, he got real angry and started pitching people in fiery furnaces. And he also might have thought, "God let us down by bringing us here in the first place. What do we owe to Him?"

He had every reason to compromise, every reason. But he didn't. Do you know why? He had character. He had real character. He had real integrity. He would learn the king's language. Yes. He would learn the sciences of the Chaldeans. He would even accept the name, but never the lifestyle. Do you hear it? Never the lifestyle; never the lifestyle.

Now, I want you to know, it didn't mean he got angry, and bitter, and callous, and had an evil spirit, and turned everybody against him. Verse 9 says that the prince of the eunuchs had compassion on him. He felt tender toward Daniel. This guy had convictions that he held with love. What a young man. What a young man.

Beloved, I say this to you. The character of an uncompromising life is based upon an absolute obedience to the principles of the Word of God. All I can say, beloved, is when the Bible says something, don't compromise that, and hold your conviction with love. And when you live an uncompromising life, God is going to use you. Man, from here on out, people, God uses Daniel in ways that are just thrilling, thrilling. Ah, be useful to God. Set a standard and live it every day of your life.

I'm going to close with this story. The story is told of a wealthy Englishman who had a collection of rare violins. There was one instrument which was of such quality and such magnificence that the eminent violinist, Fritz Kreisler, desired to have it from this wealthy Englishman, but the owner didn't want to sell it. And one day Kreisler came to see him and, of course, he could play with such virtuosity, perhaps unequaled, that the day he came he begged for the man to at least let him play this marvelous instrument.

The request was granted and the great violinist picked up the violin and he played it as only Fritz Kreisler could play it. He forgot himself, says the biographer. He poured his soul into the music and as the master artist played, the Englishman stood as one enchanted. And when Kreisler finished, not a word was spoken as he loosened the bow and the strings and placed the instrument in its case with the gentleness of a mother putting a baby in its bed. And the owner then explained, "Mr. Kreisler, you can't buy the violin. Take the violin. I have no right to keep it. It ought to belong to one who can make such beautiful music with it."

Listen, God can make beautiful music with your life. You'll see how He did with Daniel, but you've got to give Him your life. Give Him your life, and take a position of uncompromising character to live on the principles of the Word of God. Let's pray together.

Lord, we've had such a great time tonight. We just feel so overwhelmed with the story of Daniel, this wonderful, wonderful story. Lord, I pray for the dear people here, for myself, that You'd mold us into the kind of character that that fourteen-year-old, or fifteen-year-old boy had. Some of us have been around a lot longer than that and are hard pressed to find such character in our own lives.

Father, I pray for our young men, teenagers, our young women who are literally bombarded by the garbage of the world, who are tempted to talk the world's language, and get the world's education, indulge in the world's lifestyle. God, I pray that You'll raise up in this church young people like Daniel and his friends, who will not be corrupted, who will not be polluted, who will not be stained, who will not be defiled, but will base their character of an uncompromising life on the Word of God.

Lord, I'm excited because next week we're going to see the consequences of an uncompromising life, what happens when you live that way. We've seen it tonight. It's like giving a violin to a virtuoso. You take our lives and You do wondrous things with them. And so, Father, help us to dedicate ourselves afresh to You, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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