

The Consequences of an Uncompromising Life, Part 1

Scripture: Daniel 1:8-9,12

Code: 27-04

Tonight we have the wonderful privilege of continuing in our study of the book of Daniel. I'm so thrilled at your response. I just thank the Lord for the adventure that is ahead of us as we move through this tremendous, tremendous book of Daniel. Take your Bible, if you will, and let's look together at chapter 1 again, and beginning at verse 8. Tonight we're going to look at verses 8-21, 8-21, a narrative text. I don't know how far we'll get, but we'll move along, and see what it is that God has for us in this tremendous, tremendous section, in the opening portion of this prophecy of Daniel.

An eminent naturalist, in one of his textbooks, describes a marine plant which grows from a depth of 150 to 200 feet and floats on the breakers of the western ocean. The stem of this plant, according to the naturalist, is less than an inch thick, yet it grows, and thrives, and holds its own against the fierce smitings and pressures of the breakers that continue to crash against the shore.

What is the secret of this seemingly slender and frail plant? And what is the key to its marvelous endurance and resistance of the pressures that are brought to bear upon it? It is because, says the naturalist, the slender plant can face the fury of the elements since it is anchored solidly, grasping, as it were, for its very life to the naked rocks that lie at the very bottom of the water.

It is amazing how in our own lives we can endure the crushing blows of the breakers of life if we have a proper anchor. No matter how frail we seem, or how slender is the plant, when we have the proper roots and the proper anchor, we can hold ourselves to that ground. If we are to turn that illustration upside down, in a sense, we could say that while the feet of Daniel were in Babylon, his head was definitely in heaven. He really had himself anchored to the things of God. And I believe that the key to the willingness of Daniel to take a stand against the pagan society in which he lived was an unwillingness to compromise the absolutes of God.

Now, one of the things I've believed in since many, many years ago when I first made an affirmation to teach the Word of God is that where there is a principle of the Word of God, you never deviate in terms of your behavior. There are some doubtful things. There are some things in the gray area where we do not have a specific biblical word. But where we know definitely and definitively what the Bible teaches, we take our stand and never compromise. That is where we are anchored.

And that is precisely what characterized the life of this man, Daniel. He would not vacillate when it came to the absolutes of the law and the Word of God. And it anchored him to a rock of confidence

that allowed him to endure all of the storms of the Chaldean-Babylonian situation.

And by the way, if you weren't here last time, I'll just remind you that the Chaldeans were really bent upon brainwashing Daniel, his three friends, and all the rest of the young Jewish boys that they had deported in the first deportation in 606 B.C. They were committed to a brainwashing process. And Daniel and his three friends resisted that.

Now, remember that I told you last time that they selected these young men in that first deportation really as hostages to make sure that Israel didn't overreact to the initial coming of Nebuchadnezzar. When he first came and started to establish his power in the land of Israel, really in the kingdom of Judah, the hostages were taken to kind of assure the fact that Israel wouldn't rebel or revolt.

But, there was more to it than just that. The Babylonians wanted these young men to be groomed for use in the Babylonian court. I'm sure they had in mind that with their Jewish heritage they could assist them in handling Jewish affairs in future years. And you'll remember that they selected these young men on three basic features or characteristics. Number one was their physical beauty and physical form. Number two was their intellectual prowess and ability. And number three, their social graces. They picked those young men who had the greatest physical attributes, mental attributes, and social capacities, to use them in the courts of Babylon.

The plot was very simple. They would brainwash them. They would manage to eliminate in their thinking their homeland, their heritage, their religion, their God, their loyalties, and everything. And you remember they attempted to do that by changing three things. Number one, they wanted to reeducate them, to give them a Chaldean Babylonian education. Number two, they renamed them giving them Babylonian names in an effort to cut them off from the past. Thirdly, they wanted to impose upon them Chaldean lifestyle.

So, it was a matter of reeducation. It was a matter of redefinition of who they were. And it was a matter of reorientation to the matter of living according to a Chaldean lifestyle. And if it worked, they would be sufficiently brainwashed.

Now, historians tell us that it is estimated between 50 and 75 of these young men were taken out of the court of Judah. These would be royal seed and the sons of the nobles and the princes of Judah. So 50 to 75 were taken and we only know of four that drew the line and were uncompromising. So, it is likely that the brainwashing process worked in the majority of these very young men.

You'll remember that I told you also that they probably were around the age of 14 or 15, not usually a time when a young man has the character that it takes to resist a very sophisticated brainwashing operation, which has latent within it some tremendous promise for advancement, for fame and fortune in the Babylonian court.

Now, as we shared last time, Daniel and his three friends did not resist the first efforts. They did not resist the educational process. Secondly, they did not resist the changing of their names. But, thirdly, when it came to reorienting the lifestyle by forcing them to eat the king's food and to indulge in the fare that was the daily fare of the palace, to reorient themselves to that kind of thing, that's where they said no.

And the reason is clear and simple. There was no biblical mandate against the education. There was no biblical mandate against the names. But there was a clear biblical mandate against eating Chaldean food. Number one, it was food offered to idols. As was the common custom, all of their feasts were, first of all, offered to gods, their own pagan gods.

Secondly, they had very strict dietary laws which would not be adhered to by the Babylonians, and therefore while they could do the first two, realizing really what the effort was trying to accomplish and resisting it in the strength of their upbringing and their commitment to God's Word, they could not accept the third, because that would have been to deny the absolute statement of the law of God.

And the point, beloved, is this, we in our lives must draw the line where God draws the line. And He draws the line of no compromise on the basis of the absolutes of His Word. Now, you say, "Well, what about the first two? It would seem that the education would have been the most threatening."

No. Not really because they were so committed to the Word of God, they would see that education only in light of God's Word, you see? They would interpret it in the light of God's Word. And the second, they could change their names, but they sure couldn't change their hearts. They couldn't change their souls. They couldn't change their minds about what they knew to be true.

But if they had given in to the third thing and accepted and adapted the Chaldean lifestyle, then they would have denied the Word of God and fallen victim certainly to the educational process. For if they would have compromised the Word of God in their eating, they would have easily compromised the Word of God in other areas, as well.

And so we see, then, that the bottom line in an uncompromising life is the statement of the Word of God. Now, we shared also with you last time that this is a pretty amazing stand for a 14-year-old young man. It says a lot about his character. It says something about his parents. It may say something about the impact on his life of the great revival under Josiah. Somewhere along the line, Daniel had a tremendous education. Somewhere along the line, he made a commitment to God not to defile himself. And even at that early age, he lived that commitment out against incredible odds.

We need to have that same kind of character, obviously. It takes an uncompromising stand on the absolutes of the Word of God. And Daniel did it, and so did his three friends. And all of the

inducements, and education, and all the encouragements, and all the bribes, and all the pressures, and all the ambitions, and all the glories and promises of the king's court couldn't make these four young men compromise what they knew to be the truth. They wouldn't do it.

They would learn the king's language. They would study the Chaldean education. There was science, and there was mathematics, and there were many things that would be helpful. There were some things that were philosophical and theological that they would reject. But there was, in their own hearts, such a commitment to the Word of God and the law of God that all of that education would be filtered through the truth of God.

And I think we still have this today. I think as Christians, very frequently, when our faith is strong, we hear what the world is saying and we are educated in the world's universities and colleges, and so forth, but if our faith is strong, and our commitment to the Word of God is strong, that education is filtered through the Word of God. And in many cases, it makes us better able to turn the tables, and take the Word of God back to them, because we can see the weakness in their theories and their theology.

I think of men like Francis Schaeffer who is God's gift, in many ways, to this age. A man who has studied for years and years the philosophies of the world in order that in understanding the philosophies of the world, he might understand how the Word of God speaks to those philosophies, and that he might meet them on their own ground with the truth of God.

I think of scientists who have, for years, studied the theories of evolution in order that they might be refuted with the text of the Word of God. The philosophies of different cults and false religions have been studied in great detail by godly people who, in turn, have provided for us resources to counteract, and to bring the gospel to people who are trapped in false systems. Daniel and his three friends didn't fear this because they knew they had the grid of the Word of God through which to filter all of this education.

I would warn you at this point not to expose yourself to those kinds of educational opportunities unless you have that grid, or you'll find that you're liable to meet a shipwreck of your faith. People say to me, "Do you think Christians ought to go to secular universities?" The answer to that is I think some Christians ought to go there, not all of them. Some of us, maybe, have to be exposed to that in order to deal with it.

So, they didn't mind the education because they had what it took to deal with the education. And they would even take the Chaldean names. That's not so rare. We live in a society where we're named according to what's current in our society. Names don't mean anything nowadays. That didn't really bother them at all. But they never would adopt the lifestyle.

And as I said last time, it's the lifestyle of any society that is the most corrupting, you see? Because once you begin to live the way the society lives, you have abandoned yourself to their philosophy, no matter what you've been taught. Lifestyle will always be the most corrupting element of any pagan society.

And so, we see Daniel rejecting at that point. He stops the brainwashing process and will not adapt to their lifestyle. In Proverbs 4:23 it says: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." And what it means is guard your heart, because if you ever lose your heart, if you ever give away that basic part of your being that thinks, and responds, and motivates, and makes you act; if you ever abandon that, the issues of life will be corrupted. Guard your heart, and that's what Daniel did.

Now, for our study, I want us to see the consequences of such a commitment. He made the commitment last week. Now what are the results? And by the way, they could have all been bad. I mean, you know, Nebuchadnezzar was not the all-time nice guy.

And when he came along and said, "I want all these young fellows to eat the king's food. I want to obligate them to me. I want them to feel obliged to me. I want them to know that I have supported them and I have given them the very best. I want them to get a taste of the great stuff that we have here in Chaldea. I want them to hunger for these things, and forget the stuff of the past. I want them to adapt to the lifestyle. This is part of the process." And to say, "No thanks, king," could have been a pretty serious issue.

All you have to do is read a little further in the book and you find out that one time when somebody didn't do what the king said, he threw him in a fiery furnace. And another time when somebody didn't do what the king said, he threw him in a den of lions.

So, the results of taking an uncompromising stand sometimes will be bad. There's no question about it. Sometimes there's a great price to pay. Going against a pagan monarch could be very, very dangerous. But Daniel had to do it because it was in his character to do it. And his three friends, those wonderful young men mentioned in verse 6, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, they took their stand, and they walked right into that fiery furnace. Daniel took his stand and he walked right into that den of lions. If that's what it has to be, then that's what it has to be. There still would be no compromise.

Now, let's look at the text, beginning in verse 8, and I want you to see a sequence of characteristics - I think this is so exciting - a sequence of characteristics that are true of one that takes an uncompromising stand. When a person determines in his mind to live in an uncompromising way in a pagan society, there is a sequence of characteristics that I see illustrated here, and they're not in any

particular order, but I just see them manifest. And they are so practical. I'm just going to give them to you kind of in a grocery list, so you can just start writing them down.

Number one, an unashamed boldness, an unashamed boldness. Verse 8, now look at it. "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's Ashpenaz whom we met last time " - that he might not defile himself." Now, stop right there.

This is fascinating. Here is an unashamed boldness. Daniel says, "Ashpenaz, I do not wish to eat the king's food; I do not wish to drink the king's wine because it will defile me." Now, wait a minute, Daniel. That's pretty bold stuff. I mean, couldn't you hem and haw a little bit? I mean, you're telling the king that his food will defile you? I love that kind of boldness, don't you?

He doesn't say, "You know, king, ever since I was a little fella, I've had to have a special diet." He didn't con the king or the prince of the eunuchs; he didn't wiggle out of it. He didn't say, "Well, you know, my body won't adjust to this." He didn't say, "I'm very ill and, you know, I just don't feel too well. And I - I just better not, it's such rich food. And you know, Oh, I'm so used to the food in the land where I've lived, I just can't digest this."

He doesn't say that. He could have said that. We might do that. You know, many times when we want to get out of a situation that is really a spiritual issue, we give a reason other than a spiritual reason to get out of it. We don't want to admit that's it. Somebody says to you, "Hey, why don't you come along with us? We're going to do this, and we're going to do that." And we don't say, "Well, you know, I don't believe that's right. I believe it's sinful to do that and I wouldn't compromise my commitment to Jesus Christ." We say, "Well, yeah, it would be real nice but I gotta stay home tonight. I gotta do something and well, you know." We hem and haw. We don't really establish the fact that there's a spiritual issue here.

Oh, I love that. Daniel is fourteen years old, what character. He says, "By the way, tell the king I can't have his food, it will defile me." An unashamed boldness goes with an uncompromising life. It's a great thing, courageous.

He could have used a word other than "defile." That's a very strong word. Something that is defiled, it says in the Old Testament, is an abomination to the Lord. But the reason he can't eat and drink is because he would be defiled, and so that's what he said. He would be defiled, number one, because it's meat offered to idols, and he wouldn't come near an idol. Secondly, he'd be defiled because it wasn't prepared according to Jewish dietary law, and he would be violating God's laws, and that constitutes a defilement.

And you know what I believe? He doesn't say in that verse, but the fact that he said that he might not defile himself implies to me that he must have explained to Ashpenaz why it was a defilement. He must have given him a whole deal on the Old Testament dietary laws. And he must have given him a few choice words about idolatry, as well. And just let him know the whole deal, "This is where I stand. I don't do that because that's not according to God's law."

Oh, you know something? Isn't it a wonderful thing when somebody in the midst of a very tough situation is not ashamed to speak the truth of a commitment to the Lord's Word? That's real character, people, real character, real uncompromising character. He wasn't ashamed of his God and he wasn't ashamed of his faith in God, even in the midst of a pagan society, even though he was a prisoner of the king, even though the king had the right to kill him for disobedience and rebellion, it never phased his commitment.

Frankly, for normal people, the Bible says the fear of man brings a what? A snare. For most people, a fear of man traps us. Not Daniel. But those who have an uncompromising character always seem to have the unashamed boldness.

I thought this such an interesting point that I decided to chase it around a little bit in the Bible. And you know I saw it in Moses. I just love that. I see it in Moses. Moses just walks up to Pharaoh and says, "Pharaoh, let my people go." Oh, I like that. Let them go, Pharaoh. And Pharaoh says, "Let me show you who's boss." And he calls his magicians and they do tricks, and throw their little sticks down, and their sticks turn into snakes, and Moses throws his little stick down, and it turns into a snake and eats their snakes.

And he says, "Let my people go." He wasn't afraid to stand up for his God. I love it when I see Moses and he actually slays an Egyptian who is suppressing a Jew. He wasn't afraid to stand up for God and for his people.

I see it with David. A couple of times the Psalms record things that give us this insight into David's heart. Psalm 40:8, I love this, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God. Yea, Thy law is within my heart." Now, anytime a person has the law of God in their heart and they want to do the law, that's the uncompromising spirit. That's just like Daniel. David says, "I know your law, and I'm committed to doing it." So, "I have preached righteousness in the congregation: Lo, I have not restrained my lips, O Lord, Thou knowest." I never pulled a punch. I never held back a word of righteous truth.

"I have not - " he says in verse 10 " - hidden Thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared Thy faithfulness. I have declared Thy salvation: I have not concealed Thy lovingkindness. I have not concealed Thy truth from the great congregation." He says, "God, I am committed to it, and I have unashamedly, boldly preached it." O, God, give us people like this.

Later on in Psalm 71:15, "My mouth shall show forth Thy righteousness and Thy salvation all the day." All day long, he says, my mouth will show forth Thy righteousness and salvation. Unashamed boldness.

Daniel's friends had it. Look over at the third chapter of Daniel. It's just really great. Verse 13, Nebuchadnezzar was so furious and filled with rage that he brings in Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael - renamed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. And he brought them in and he said unto them, "Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?" Have you failed to do what I told you to do?

"Now if you be ready that at that time that you hear the sound of the - " and then he names the whole orchestra that blew when it was time to worship the gods " - If you don't fall down, I'll cast you in the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" He has a rather weak view of God.

"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said - " I love this " - O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this manner." It's no big deal to respond to you. "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we'll not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." It doesn't matter what happens, we won't worship your image. Oh, what boldness. What upright character is manifest in those three young boys.

We see it again in the New Testament so many times, this same kind of unashamed boldness that comes with an uncompromising heart. I'm thinking of a verse here, yes, Mark 8:38. Our Lord says, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." Wow. That's pretty strong stuff, isn't it?

In 1 Peter 4:16, it says: "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed." You know, when you suffer for a Christian, you know, when you take a lot of abuse, and people talk down to you, and people hassle you, it's easy to just kind of be ashamed to be a Christian, and you just clam up. As I've said, some Christians are like the Arctic River, frozen over at the mouth. They just don't say anything. They just don't let it be known because of shame. But Peter says, "Let none of you suffering as a Christian be ashamed."

I love to see Paul at the end of the book of Acts. As he paraded through a bunch of puppet rulers: Felix, Festus, Agrippa; and every time, without hesitation, boldly, unashamedly he preaches Jesus Christ. He writes to Timothy and he says, "Timothy, Timothy, God has not given us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. And, Timothy, do not be ashamed of me, the

prisoner of Christ, and do not be ashamed of the gospel.”

A beautiful verse is recorded in Psalm 119:46. It says this, “I will speak of Thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.” Isn’t that great? “I will speak Thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.” There shouldn’t be anybody in this world to intimidate you out of your message, nobody.

Daniel had the character that stands fearlessly and boldly and unashamedly before kings, and speaks what is the truth, an undaunted spirit of complete commitment to God that rendered him amazingly honest. Isn’t that great, being valiant for the truth?

Ezekiel calls it “setting your face like flint.” And flint, of course, is very hard, being resolute, non-compromising. In fact, in 1 Chronicles 12:8, the same virtue is called “setting your face like a lion.” Not too many things intimidate a lion.

In Philippians 1:27 – I just love this, “Only let your conduct be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel - ” now, listen to this one “ - and in nothing terrified by your adversaries.” Isn’t that great? In nothing terrified by your adversaries, boldly willing to stand and speak.

I found an interesting illustration in an old book. This is out of a sermon by D. L. Moody and I’m going to read it to you.

“There’s a story of a young man that came up with a little handful of men to attack a king who had a great army of 3,000 men. The young man had only 500, and the king sent a messenger to the young man saying that he need not fear to surrender, for he would treat him mercifully. The young man called up one of his soldiers and said, ‘Take this dagger and drive it to your heart.’ And the soldier took the dagger and drove it to his heart. And calling up another, he said to him, ‘Leap into yonder chasm.’ And the man leaped into the chasm.

“The young man then said to the messenger, ‘Now go back and tell your king I’ve got 500 more like these. We will die, but we will never surrender. And tell your king another thing, that I will have him chained with my dog inside half an hour.’ And when the king heard that, he didn’t dare to meet them, and his army fled before them like chaff before the wind, and within 24 hours, he had the king chained with his dog.”

I trust D.L. Moody, but I don’t know how true that story is. I’m certainly not going to despair of the man who isn’t around, but it illustrates the point. There’s a level of commitment involved. Uncompromising character has a holy, fearless courage that knows no shame in bearing the name of Jesus Christ.

And so, in a way, you can measure whether you have that uncompromising stand, whether you're living that uncompromising life if you find that unashamed boldness.

I tell you, once in your own mind, like Daniel, you purpose in your heart that where God's Word draws an absolute line, you will draw an absolute line, and unashamedly and boldly you will stand there, and you will speak His testimonies before kings, you're going to find that boldness a reality in your life. And you know what? Those are the kind of people God really uses.

I have a friend, and some of you may have met him, Rick Wilder. He lives up in San Francisco and he feels God's called him to confront sinners. And that's the place to do it. He has a church there. He has that church and he just takes his people out, and they just go right down the street, and he just goes right up to the homosexuals and tells them they need Jesus Christ.

And he starts on the street corner and he just preaches Jesus Christ to the top of his voice. He gets drug addicts, addicts, former homosexuals, the most dissolute people you can imagine, the outcasts of society, those harlots, and everything else, and he's started a little church, and he's got a church of the biggest pile of has-beens you ever saw.

And he says trying to mold them into some semblance of a body is just a difficult task. He told me, he said, You know, "I'd like to take a vacation. I'd like to take a day off. But if I leave these people one day without hanging on the edge of them, they'll fall back into their old ways." "So," he says, "I can't leave town for a day." And he spends all day, all week long, ministering to these people. He has an uncompromising spirit that issues in an unashamed boldness.

Let me give you a second point. I believe an uncompromising life will result in an uncommon standard, not only an unashamed boldness, but an uncommon standard. You know, people who have an uncompromising life just don't do it the way everybody else does. Have you ever noticed that?

There is a pastor in Aberdeen, Scotland by the name of Willy Still. Some call him the Martyn Lloyd-Jones of Scotland. And I was reading a little book that Eric Leaver gave me the other day written by him called *The Work of the Pastor*. And he said basically - this is his phrase, "The people God uses the most are the odd-bods." He said, "So, you shouldn't be surprised if you run into some odd-bods. In fact, everybody I've ever known specially used of God was an odd bod."

Now, I hear him. He's saying for people who have this kind of uncompromising life, there will inevitably be an uncommon standard. They won't do it the way everybody else does it. They will set their standard a cut above the masses, even a cut above the Christians. They just don't live on that normal plane. They set standards that always exceed the norm.

I remember when I was a little kid, just in high school, I got to reading some people who are great at prayer, and I just couldn't believe the commitment they made to that. And I read a couple of missionary biographies, and these people were just, they didn't live the Christian life the way anybody I knew did. And there were lots of people, you know, who went by the book, but it seemed as if these people just went up to another level.

Well, look at the end of verse 8 again. He says that I don't want any portion of the king's food; I don't want any of the wine which the king drinks. Now, go down to verse 12. He says, in fact, I'll go a step further, "Just give us vegetables and water." Now, wait a minute. You don't have to eat the wine of the king, and you don't have to eat the food of the king, but you could certainly eat some other food, and you could certainly drink some proper kind of wine.

But, Daniel says, "Look, I want to go to an uncommon standard, not any wine at all." He was a teetotaler, total abstinence, drinking only water, and not any kind of meat, just what they call "pulse," some kind of beans and seeds. That's it.

Well, you say, "Daniel, this is not really necessary." But, people who make the kind of commitment he made always want to live at the highest plane. They seem to choose a standard above everybody else. Their ministries are a cut above the rest. They have a higher level of commitment. They have a more faithful prayer life. They're just a little bit more committed to a deep study of the Word of God.

And I can illustrate this principle by just dealing with the issue of wine, for example, here. Now, why does Daniel say, "I don't - I'm not going to drink any wine at all?" And by the way, he sustains this commitment all the way through this thing. Why does he do that? It isn't required of him.

In fact, the Old Testament talks about yayin, which is a word for "wine," as a very common part of Jewish society. We went into that a little bit, I believe. As you know, it was a mixed wine so that it was diluted, and it was proper to drink it. In fact, drink offerings were used in the sacrificial system. There was even a supply of wine kept in the temple. Isaiah 24 talked about wine drinking being associated with singing and having a joyful time. Isaiah 55, wine is actually a symbol of salvation.

So, in the Old Testament, it wasn't that wine in itself - a properly mixed wine in itself - was wrong or evil. Well, why does he choose this standard? Well, that's just the way it is with those kind of commitments. Let me give you an illustration. Go back to Leviticus chapter 10 for a minute - Leviticus 10:8.

"And the Lord spake unto Aaron." Now, Aaron isn't just like everybody. Aaron is the high priest, and Aaron's people would be the priestly people. And so the Lord speaks to Aaron, and through Aaron to all those who would be involved in the priesthood, and He says, in effect, "If you are to be a priest, do not drink wine, nor strong drink, - " neither yayin or shekar " - thou, nor thy sons with thee, when you

go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest you die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations: And that you may put difference between holy and unholy, between unclean and clean; And that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord has spoken unto them by the hand of Moses.”

In other words, don't touch it because if you ever touched it, you might find yourself falling prey to its temptation, and then you would lose the ability to properly distinguish between holy and unholy and to rightly teach the people. You're in too precarious a position to fool with it.

In Numbers chapter 6, look with me for a moment. Numbers chapter 6, “The Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite - ” which means, by the way, “to be separated,” not to be from Nazareth, that's a different word, but when you take a vow of separation, to separate unto the Lord “ - you will separate yourself from wine and strong drink and no vinegar of wine, no vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat any moist grapes, or any dried grapes. All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing made of the vine tree, from the kernel even to the husk.”

Now listen, it wasn't required that everybody live this way. But somebody who wanted to set their life in a unique way as separated unto God set an uncommon standard, do you see? It was a matter of your choice. But when it was established that you wanted to live on the very highest plain, and when you took that occasion to do so, you set an uncommon standard.

Look with me for a moment at the 31st chapter of Proverbs, the final chapter, and you find a similar thing. In Proverbs 31:4, “It is not - ” now listen to this. “It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink.” And by the way, Daniel well may have come from a royal family, and then been taught this tremendous biblical principle, and that is part and parcel of the reason he never would touch the wine. It may have been that he had already made this commitment as a part of the royal family.

But “it is not for kings, it is not for princes, lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the justice of any of the afflicted. Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish.” When somebody is in the last throes and the agonies of death, sedate them with it. But don't give it to people who must make decisions on a spiritual level. There is an uncommon standard for the greatest spiritual responsibility.

First Timothy chapter 5 takes us into the New Testament thought on this. And I think it's interesting to hear the apostle Paul say to Timothy, “Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake.” Why do you think he said that? “Drink no longer water?” I'll tell you why I believe he said it, because Timothy never drank anything but water. The fact that Paul has to instruct him to take a little wine, and tell him not to just drink water indicates to me that Timothy did not customarily drink wine.

That wasn't something that was necessarily an overt command to him. That was a choice he made, an uncommon standard.

I believe in Luke chapter 1, it says of John the Baptist, "He shall drink neither wine nor strong drink." It tells us that an elder in 1 Timothy is not to be given to wine. It says it in Titus he's not to be given to wine. The point is this, people. Those who choose the highest and the best, those who desire to live at the most uncompromising level of commitment, seek an uncommon standard.

And Daniel, for certain, wanted to be distinguished from the gluttons and the drunkards of Babylon, that there would be no confusion. And so he not only says, "I will not drink the king's wine," he says, "I will not drink any wine at all, only water, only water."

And I think in this day, I know in my own life, that's a choice that I've made. It doesn't make me more spiritual. It's just that I feel that that's one place where I can set an uncommon standard for myself, that I might not be drawn into a compromising position, that I might avoid all appearance of evil.

So, Daniel, though the king commanded it, didn't drink. How much easier it should be for us when there's no such command upon us and no necessity, either? Great men, you know - and I'm sure that Daniel knew God's laws on this - great men have fallen to the power of drink. You have only to look further in the book of Daniel to see Belshazzar losing the Babylonian Empire in the midst of a drunken stupor.

You have only to study history to realize that at the age of 33, Alexander the Great lost the world empire because he was already a full-fledged drunkard. When the iron duke of England, called the Duke of Wellington, was marching his army across the Iberian Peninsula, word was brought to his headquarters that ahead of him was a vast store of Spanish wine that his troops could enjoy. He stopped his army on the spot. He sent some of his men ahead. And he said, "Blow it to bits." And they blew the winery to pieces, and then he marched his army on.

It is said that the reason Napoleon Bonaparte lost the battle at Waterloo to the victorious Duke of Wellington was because the night before Marshal Ney tarried too long over his favorite glass of wine, and the next morning his head was clouded, his mind unsteady, and he made bad decisions.

When France fell in World War II against Hitler, Marshal Petain said, quote: "France was defeated because its army was drunk." And the Vichy government of 1940 said the reason for the collapse for the moral fiber of the French army was due to alcohol, plain and simple.

It's never done anybody any favors. Daniel had an uncommon standard. A really uncompromising life will not play on the edge of what is right, it will choose the highest and the noblest and the best. Let me give you one more.

An uncompromising life is characterized by an unashamed boldness, an uncommon standard, and thirdly, an earthly protection, an unearthly protection. This is great. Verse 9, "Now God - " I love those two words. Did you get that? "Now God - " You know as well as I do - get this - that when anybody establishes a standard like Daniel did, God will be on his side, right? So, it's only a matter of time until we read, "Now God." It didn't take long. "Daniel purposed in his heart," in verse 8, and God moved in verse 9.

Beloved, if you don't get anything else, get this, that God responds to this kind of commitment. "God had brought Daniel into favor and compassion with the prince of the eunuchs." Amazing.

Now, you know, let me just talk about this for a minute. It's axiomatic, I think, that even if people disagree with your convictions, they admire you for sticking up to them, right? I mean, everybody loves somebody with character. You know, you're so sick of wishy-washy, pusillanimous little puny people who vacillate about everything, who flow like flotsam and jetsam with the tide, like water-soaked sticks washing back and forth under a pier. You get so tired of people who are spineless. It is axiomatic, that when you meet somebody with convictions, you respect that person, especially if their convictions are strong, moral, conscientious convictions.

Integrity, I think, is a valued thing. We put a premium on integrity. But that's not the issue here. It wasn't Daniel's integrity that swayed Ashpenaz, the prince of the eunuchs. Now, you say, "Well, maybe it was just that Daniel was such a nice guy." Well, I think he was. I think Daniel had a gracious and loving personality. I think that comes out further on in this section as we see some more things about him. The way he talks is such a loving, and there's such a gentleness about him, such a lack of pushiness. He's just a beautiful kind of character that naturally goes with a godly man. We would expect to find it.

But I don't even think it was even his amazing personality. So I don't think it was the human value placed on integrity and so forth. I don't think it was the pleasing personality of the man. I think the reason things went so well is this. "Now God brought Daniel into favor and compassion." Sovereign act of God.

This is so important, folks. God is controlling everything. God had a plan for Daniel. God had a purpose for Daniel. And God wanted Daniel to be a witness in Babylon. I believe Daniel is the key, in one sense, to a great part of the panorama of the Christmas story. I question whether ever would be wise men coming from the east if there never was a Daniel. I mean, God had a long-range plan for this guy.

Behind the scenes of the return at the end of the 70 years, as the people go back to their land, behind the scenes is the character and the ministry of Daniel, whom I believe brought it to pass as the agent

of God. Amazing man. God had a plan and God - now watch this - just moved into the heart of that guy and He just pushed in there favor and compassion, and He said in His sovereignty, "Ashpenaz, you will love Daniel." And he did, and he did.

And I don't guess he knew why he did, but he did. It's tremendous. And you know, even Nebuchadnezzar, who was brilliant, who was powerful, couldn't do anything to sway or change the plan of God. God put it into that man's heart to be kind to Daniel.

Now listen to me. You live an uncompromising life and you will enjoy an unearthly protection. People say, "Oh, well, if I stick my neck out - " people sometimes say that to me " - don't you - you say things, you know? You just speak what you think, and you say what the Bible says. Don't you worry of what will happen?"

Well, I might worry about it for a minute, but it passes very rapidly. Because I'm saying, "Look, God. This is Your Word. You got me into this, now get me out of it." And I believe that until the time comes when God says, "It's time for you to be finished, MacArthur," I believe I enjoy an unearthly protection. That's just the way it is. I think God protects those who make a commitment to Him.

Now, what's important about this is - now listen to me - usually we compromise because we're afraid we'll get into trouble, when the fact is if we didn't compromise God would be our protection in the midst of trouble. But as soon as you compromise, you forfeit that unearthly protection and you're on your own. And then one compromise leads to what? Another compromise, and another one, and then you're really stuck, because if you ever tell the truth, they know you've been a phony all along. Uncompromising, that's Daniel, and God protected him.

In 1 Kings 8:50, it says, "And forgive Thy people who have sinned against Thee, and all their transgressions in which they have transgressed against Thee, and give them compassion before them who carried them captive, that they may have compassion upon them." Here are people saying, "God, give them compassion." And God will do it, God will do it.

People say, "You know, if we were living in a society that was oppressive and if we were - people were coming down on us, and shooting us for our faith, and so forth and so on, would we still speak the truth?" Listen, if we didn't speak the truth and compromised, we would be on our own. If we spoke the truth, no matter what happened, then God is our unearthly protector.

And if God says, "You live," there isn't a king in the world that could take your life, right? Not one. Boy, that's terrific. You have nothing to fear. You say, "Well, if I really say what I think, if I really stand for the truth, I'll lose my job." So, compromise and lose God's resource. Does that make sense? Who do you want on your team, your boss or God? There isn't a boss in the world who could move you until God allows it.

Psalm 106:46. I just have to share this with you, because I think it sums up the whole idea. Listen, this is great. It's talking here about how God cares for His people. This is so good. "He made them - " this is talking about His people Israel. "He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives." Now listen to me. This isn't just Ashpenaz. God made the whole pile of Chaldeans and Babylonians compassionate toward His people. Do you realize that God can not only sway a king, God can sway an entire society?

Why? Because, verse 45 says He is a covenant keeping God and He made a covenant with His people. And, beloved, we have a covenant with our God in Christ, don't we? If we live an uncompromising life, God will take care of us.

I always think of David. David is so great, but he sure did some klutzy things, and one of the dumbest things he ever did was when he was up in the Philistines' country and he went into the palace. And, of course, here he was, an archenemy of the Philistines and he's in the palace, and he becomes fearful. Instead of saying, "I am David who is the king of the people of God. I am David who speaks for Jehovah. I will not falter to give His testimonies."

Instead of confronting that pagan situation, he gets afraid. So, you know what he does? He pretends he's nuts. That's right. That's exactly what he did. He pretended he was crazy. And the first thing he did was he started slobbering in his beard. The Bible says he drooled all over his beard. Now the beard in the orient was a sign of your dignity. To slobber in your beard was very, very undignified. I think it still leaves a lot to be desired. But anyway, it was a very undignified behavior.

You know what he did? He started slobbering in his beard, and he acted like a madman, and it says he kept running his hands up and down the gates like he was crazy. And you say to yourself, "David? The sweet singer of Israel? Who wrote all the scriptures? David whose hands were covered with blood because of all the victories he had won? David the great man of God? David, that handsome musician who had every heart of every woman in the land? David, that majestic figure? David, going around slobbering and doing this?"

And you know what the king says? Look, we've got enough nuts in this court. Get rid of that guy. That's what he said. And they shipped him out of there and he goes, "Oh, oh, my plan worked." And then he crawls in a cave out in the middle of nowhere, and he pens a psalm. And the psalm, in effect, says, "God, I was really a fool, wasn't I? I compromised." And for all history, God recorded that stupidity so everybody would know it. Instead of believing that You were my deliverer, and if I had lived in an uncompromising way, unashamedly bold, before those people, if I had lived at an uncommon standard, I would have had an unearthly protection.

And those Philistines couldn't have laid a hand on me anymore than Goliath with his great big Philistine sword could do anything against my little handful of rocks. Oh, how soon David forgot. An unearthly protection is promised to the one who doesn't compromise.

There's a great word. You have to hear it. Proverbs 16:7, just listen. "When a man's ways please the Lord, - " listen to this " - he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." Is that great? "When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." So, what is the point in life then? Please the Lord. Live with an unashamed boldness. Live at an uncommon standard and gain an unearthly protection. Boy, it's exciting to have that sense of being invincible.

Beloved, can I say this to you? The hearts of all men are in the hands of God. You see it? They're in the hands of God, the hearts of all men. Not some men, the hearts of all men. And all you have to do is please God and He'll control their hearts. So, Daniel's life portrays what God will do for a person who is faithfully obedient to Him.

By the way, look back at verse 9 for a moment. The word "favor" is the word for "tender love, compassion," so forth, really means "unfailing love." He had a virtuous kind of unfailing love, as well as a gut-level, just an affection. It was both a true kind of love, and one that knew emotion. This guy really loved Daniel. Oh, what a setup this is for Daniel.

You know something? If you want to get somewhere in God's kingdom, you don't have to play politics. Just don't compromise. Let God put you there. If God wants to lift you up in a society, or lift you up in a church, or lift you up in a ministry, or lift you up in some kind of situation, live an uncompromising life, and let God work on the hearts of people who will draw you to that place. Don't seek it on your own.

God takes special care of His faithful, uncompromising people. I think of little Moses. What does Moses know? All he knows is he's floating down the Nile River. He doesn't know from what. Next thing he knows, he's living in Pharaoh's palace.

You say, "How did he get there?" He just got picked up and stuck there. And you know what? Even his own mother was there to nurse him. Who masterminded that? God did. We don't need to use politics, self-effort. When we don't compromise, we have an unearthly protection. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, what great truths we've learned tonight. An uncompromising life. Oh, the blessedness of an uncompromising life with an unashamed boldness that calls on us to live at an uncommon standard, that allows us to depend totally on an unearthly protection. And that's only the beginning, Lord. There are at least five other things in this chapter. How majestic, and marvelous, and thrilling to know that blessedness from You is given to the one who lives by Your standards.

Thank You, Father, for what You've taught us tonight. Make us an uncompromising people with the same kind of love, the same kind of gentleness, the same kind of tenderness that we saw in Daniel. The same kind of gentleness and tenderness we see in Jesus, but never compromising on what we know is the absolute truth of Your Word.

Help us not to live the way other people live. Help us to choose a cut above. Help us never to be ashamed. To echo with the apostle Paul, "I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation." May we never be ashamed so that when we see You face to face You will never be ashamed of us.

Thank You, Lord, for calling us to this life and promising us Your protection when we live it. For the glory of Christ we pray. Amen.

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