

The Consequences of an Uncompromising Life, Part 2

Scripture: Daniel 1:10-21

Code: 27-05

I had an interesting experience this week when I saw a copy of the latest edition of *Psychology Today*, which is a magazine dealing with the professional area of psychology. And there was an article in that magazine about fast talking. Now, I remember when I first came to Grace Church, the people used to get on me a little bit about talking so fast. Not too many people say much about that. I don't know whether I've slowed down or whether you've just sped up in your listening. One of the two has happened. But I used to hear, "You're talking way too fast. You're talking way too fast."

And I used to say to people, "I have a lot of things that I need to say, and I figure that I can't talk as fast as you can think, so I'm behind to begin with. And if I'm going to catch up with you, I've got to talk real fast or you'll get bored." And I just used to say that off the cuff. Some of you may remember me saying that when you told me I talked too fast and sort of a backhanded compliment to say I'm trying to speed up to catch up with your brain.

But in the latest issue of *Psychology Today*, they have done some tests that literally prove that up to a certain point, the faster you talk, the greater the interest, and the higher the retention. So, with that we'll go on.

But I was really amazed to find that out. I'd always believed that and now they've tested and found out. In fact, you may be seeing that thirty-minute television programs, according to this article, will be done in fifteen minutes, they'll just speed it up and you'll lose nothing. And commercials, they say, now with a \$100,000.00 per 30 seconds, they can now use a 15 second one, and they can double their income. It's amazing, but when you cover a lot of ground rapidly, people stay interested and they retain the information. And so, I just really was excited about that. Now I have some support for the way I talk, and that was kind of exciting.

Well, let's rapidly go through Daniel chapter 1 and hope you retain it. Daniel chapter 1. And we have been looking, beginning in our last study, at verses 8-21, Daniel 1:8-21. I'm going to read it to you to set the scene for our study tonight.

"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. And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed

your food and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse looking than the youths who are of your age? then shall ye make me endanger my head with the king. Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us vegetables to eat, and water to drink. Then let our countenances looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the youths that eat of the portion of the king's food: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.

“So, he consented to them in this matter, and tested them ten days. And at the end of the ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the youths who did eat the portion of the king's food. Thus Melzar took away the portion of their food, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them vegetables.

“As for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in - ” that would be three years “ - then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. And the king conversed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm. And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.”

Have you ever heard it said every man has his price? I'm sure you have. Your price is the point at which you sell out your claimed conviction, the point at which you abandon your moral standard for some personal gain. Does every man have his price? Will every one of us sell out at some point or another? Do all of us have moral standards that are only valid insofar as they accommodate our desires? Or, do we then, when we have a greater desire, set it aside for the sake of those standards which we say we believe?

Martin Luther stood before the Diet of Worms. They demanded that he recant or lose his life. But he would not deny Christ. Latimer and Ridley stood before the stakes where they were to be burned to death for their faith in Christ, and their executioners demanded that they deny the Lord Jesus Christ. They refused and were consumed in the flames.

People like that have no price. They can't be bought. There's no point at which they sell out. I mentioned to you some weeks ago that I had the occasion to meet a Dr. Hong who is the principal of the largest Christian school in the world of some 6,000 students in Seoul, Korea. Dr. Hong told us that he had occasion when he was a boy to watch the Japanese infiltrate North Korea where he lived, and they came to his house because his father was a leader in the church, and they demanded that his father deny Jesus Christ or they would cut off his thumbs, and they began with the first thumb and he wouldn't deny Christ, and they cut off the second thumb and he still wouldn't deny Christ. Some

people don't have a price. They don't sell out. There is no compromise no matter what the cost.

But, on the other hand, we often hear of people all the time who boast their moral standards, who extol their righteous character, who want to announce their great set of convictions, yet for expedience sake, they sell out. They abandon those convictions when, for some reason or another, they feel themselves better suited to that.

Compromise is very subtle. Listen. People say they believe the Bible, but they stay in churches where the Bible isn't taught. People claim convictions about sin and punishment until that sin is committed by their own children. People say they must speak out about dishonesty and corruption until it refers to their boss and might cause the loss of their job. People have high moral standards until their lusts are released from the bondage of a holy conscience by an unholy relationship and then they rationalize their compromise. People are honest until just a little dishonesty will save them a lot of money.

People know something to be definitely wrong but for the sake of making peace, they cover up the truth. People will do an act directly violating their claimed conviction if they are asked by someone they admire, someone they fear, or someone from whom they seek a favor. People won't say what ought to be said because they feel they might lose face. And so go the compromises.

Adam compromised God's law, followed his wife's sin, and lost paradise. Abraham compromised the truth, lied about Sarah, and nearly lost his wife. Sarah compromised God's Word, sent Abraham to Hagar who bore Ishmael, and lost peace in the Middle East. Esau compromised for a meal with Jacob and lost his birthright. Saul compromised the divine Word, kept the animals, and lost the royal seed. Aaron compromised his convictions about idolatry and he and the people lost the privilege of the Promised Land.

Samson compromised righteous devotion as a Nazarite with Delilah and lost his strength, his eyes, and his life. Israel compromised the commands of the Lord, lived in sin, and when fighting the Philistines, lost the ark of God. David compromised the moral and divine standard of God, adulterated Bathsheba, murdered Uriah, and lost his child. Solomon compromised convictions, married foreign wives, and lost the United kingdom.

Ahab compromised, married Jezebel, and lost his throne.

Israel compromised the law of God with sin and idolatry, and lost their homeland. Peter compromised his conviction about Christ, denied Him, and lost his joy. Later on, he compromised the truth of the one church for acceptance with the Judaizers, and he lost his liberty. Ananias and Sapphira compromised their word about giving, lied to the Holy Spirit, and lost their lives. Judas compromised his supposed love for Christ for 30 pieces of silver, and lost his eternal soul.

Compromise. Sad word. But, there are some people who don't compromise. There are some people who have no price. You can't buy them. Moses before Pharaoh; David, several times in his life; Paul before Festus, Felix, and Agrippa; and Daniel before Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel 1:8, "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." And frankly, beloved, there's no better illustration of an undefiled, uncompromising man in the Bible than Daniel.

Now, we're studying Daniel. For over 70 years he lived in this foreign land of Babylon, amidst the pagan Chaldeans, and for those 70 years he never compromised his convictions. He couldn't be bought. There was no price. From the time that we pick up the story here, he's 14 years of age, until he is in his 80s, he does not compromise. He will not compromise.

And we have seen that when the Babylonians and the Chaldeans brought these young men in in the first deportation in 606 B.C., the first phase of the Babylonian captivity, when they brought these young men in, they were all of the noble house of the ruling class of Israel, Judah. They were, some of them, from the very royal seed itself. They picked off, some historians estimate, between 50 and 75 of the prime young men, princely young men, and they brought them in to brainwash them and to turn them into Chaldeans who, with a Jewish background, could help them rule in the process of leading Jewish affairs.

They were going to take over the world, they were going to turn Judah into a chattel state, and they wanted some young men who knew the Jewish situation, who could be Babylonian rulers for them amidst the Jewish people, and over them even while they were in captivity.

So, they wanted these young men brainwashed. And first they decided to change their names to cut them off from their heritage. And then they, of course, removed them from their country so that they wouldn't have any roots or connections there. They then wanted them to be educated, and learned in all the Chaldean information. They wanted them to be attacked from every angle with Chaldean identification. And the final thing was to brainwash them by feeding them the food of the king so that their lifestyle would become adapted to that of the palace of the pagans in Babylon.

And that, of course, is where Daniel drew the line. Why? The Old Testament didn't say anything about taking a foreign name, and the Old Testament didn't say anything about learning information from foreign teachers, but the Old Testament said, "Don't eat food offered to idols, and don't eat food that isn't properly prepared according to God's dietary laws for His people." And the bottom line for Daniel was the Word of God.

And when eating the king's food violated the Word of God - because all of the food that was offered in the palace was, at one point, offered before the gods - Daniel couldn't do it and that's where he drew the line. He drew the line at the Word of God.

This is true conviction. This is the character that is so admirable in Daniel. At a young age, he and his 3 friends, out of all of the 50 or 75 young men, and we don't know how many, but we only know 4 who took a stand. And later on, when all of them appeared before the king, down in verse 18 and following, there were only 4 that the king noticed as different. The rest of them in this three-year education had bought the bag, had eaten the king's meat, had adapted the lifestyle, had become Chaldean, and in so doing they had lost that unique place that God would have given had they been obedient to His law. And so, Daniel is a tremendous illustration of conviction, especially in a young man.

You know, our country once had that. I was reading this week, and I found something very interesting. There is in West Point a prayer known as "The Cadet Prayer." It is repeated every Sunday in chapel services by the cadets at West Point. I don't know if you ever heard it, but this is what it says.

"Make us choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong, and never to be contented with half truth when whole truth can be one. Endow us with courage that is borne of loyalty to all that is noble and worthy, that scorns to compromise with vice and injustice, and knows no fear when right and truth are in jeopardy. Amen."

A great prayer. An uncompromising prayer. We once knew in our own country the meaning of an uncompromising life. Even Aesop in his fables knew the price of compromise. Aesop speaks in one of his fables about the time when the beasts and the fowls were engaged in war. The bat tried to belong to both parties, says Aesop. And when the birds were victorious, the bat would wing around telling them he was a bird. And when the beasts won a fight, he would walk around among them assuring everyone that he was a beast. But soon his hypocrisy was discovered and he was rejected by both the beasts and the birds, and consequently he had to hide himself all day long and could only appear at night. Compromise.

Daniel wouldn't compromise. Neither would Mishael, Azariah or Hananiah. And what were the results of their uncompromising life? Let's go back and look at them. And we said there were some things that come out as characteristics and consequences of an uncompromising life. I'm just going to mention the ones we talked about last time, and then we'll go on to the rest of them.

First of all, when you live a life that doesn't compromise, that doesn't fall prey to the lifestyle of the world, that doesn't sell out at any price, you will find, number one, an unashamed boldness, an

unashamed boldness. In verse 8, Daniel said to the prince of the eunuchs, “Tell the king I can’t eat his food it will defile me.” And I told you last time there would have been a lot of other things he could have said that would have been easier.

He didn’t have to be so blatant about the fact that the king’s food would defile him, but one of the characteristics of an uncompromising strong stand where someone has convictions is that that individual has an unashamed boldness to speak the truth. He could have hemmed and hawed about the fact that he wasn’t used to the king’s diet, or he was so used to Jewish food that it wasn’t agreeing with his stomach, and he was going to have an upset stomach, and he could have wormed his way out of it. But no, there was a tremendous confrontation about the fact that it violated God’s law and it would be a defilement to Him.

And we find that he had this unashamed boldness. When they came to him later and said, “You’re not allowed to pray,” he went to his window, threw the window wide open, and prayed like he always did, just as boldly as ever, because that’s the character of uncompromising spirit.

Secondly, we saw last time that an uncompromising life not only has an unashamed boldness, but secondly, an uncommon standard, an uncommon standard. It says, “He did not eat the king’s food, nor the wine which the king drank.” In verse 12, “He ate only vegetables and water,” which means he didn’t eat any meat from any source and he didn’t drink any wine from any source. Now, that wasn’t required, that was an uncommon standard, that was a cut above.

And you remember last time, I told you, that in the Old Testament when it came to the priests, and it came to those who wanted to take the deepest vow of consecration, and when you come into the New Testament, and you look at John the Baptist, the greatest man that ever lived up until his time, and then you look not only at John the Baptist, but at the elders of the church, you find that in all of these high places, there is a statement that they are not to be given to wine.

Those who are given high spiritual responsibility have an uncommon standard. He chose to live on another level. And we suggest to you that an uncompromising life doesn’t play on the edge of the best. It chooses the highest and the noblest standard of all, no matter what the price.

For months Eric Liddell trained as a track athlete for the purpose of winning the 100-meter race in the Olympics of 1924. Sports writers all over the country predicted that Liddell would win the 100 meters. And then he learned that the 100-meter race in 1924 in the Olympics was scheduled for Sunday. This posed a problem. Eric believed that he could not honor God by running in the contest on the Lord’s day. His fans were stunned by his refusal. Some who had praised him began to call him a fool, and the press laughed at Eric Liddell, because he wouldn’t run on Sunday.

Suddenly, a runner dropped out of the 400-meter race and they had no alternate to take his place, and it was scheduled for a week day. Eric offered to fill the slot even though this is four times as long as the race he had trained to run. When he ran the race, Eric Liddell won the race. In 1924, he ran 47.8 seconds. Incredible time. And he was a winner.

God gave him his gold medal. God honored his non-compromising spirit. Later, Eric Liddell went to China as a missionary, and in 1945 he died there in a war camp, ever as uncompromising as he had been before.

It just seems to me, that people who really make a difference in the world, set a standard that is a cut above everybody else. It isn't the required thing. It's just that extra noble step that sets them apart.

So, an uncompromising life issues in an unashamed boldness and an uncommon standard. And thirdly, we shared last time that it results in an unearthly protection, an unearthly protection. I believe God unusually protects those who are uncompromising. Verse 9, "God brought Daniel into favour and compassion with the prince of the eunuchs." That's amazing. "God brought Daniel into favour and compassion with the prince of the eunuchs."

Daniel didn't have to play politics to gain that, did he? We learned last week. Daniel was given that by God, who controls the heart of every living being. And if God wants them to be kind to you, then He'll take care of it. You don't have to compromise to gain your ends. You don't have to compromise to gain the goals you think you must attain. To do so is to eliminate divine protection, but to be uncompromising is to invite the protection of God Himself.

I'd rather stand bold-face to the king and condemn his sin and have God on my side than wiggle out of it and have the king on my side and God against me, wouldn't you? Because God can control the heart of the king.

Let me read you just a portion of Scripture from 1 Samuel 2:22. "Now Eli was very old - " Eli, the high Priest " - and heard all that his sons did unto Israel; and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation." They were horrible sons. "And he said unto them, Why do you do such things? I hear of your evil dealings by all this people." It's not good for you to do this, and it's not a good report I hear. You make the Lord's people transgress. "If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him, but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall mediate for him? Notwithstanding they hearken not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them."

In other words, God - get this - actually held them in a constant state of rebellion in order to bring them to judgment. They had gone so far there was no possibility to repent. God literally controlled their rebellion.

And verse 30, "The Lord God of Israel said, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from Me; for them who honor Me, I will honor, and they who despise Me shall be lightly despised."

God says, "Look, you may be the high priest and you may have all of the promises of that priesthood, but I will set those at naught if you dishonor Me. If you honor Me, I'll honor you. If you despise Me, I'll despise you." The point is this. The way we live either brings God into our defense or sets God against us. And when we are obedient to God and live an uncompromising life, God honors us. God is our defender. It's tremendous, tremendous truth, people. And I hope, if you weren't here last week, you'll get the material on that and study it through.

I think about Joseph so often. Joseph and Daniel are almost like parallels. Here was Joseph, sold, as it were, into slavery by his evil brothers. And what happens to him? He winds up as a prime minister of Egypt. Both Joseph and Daniel were in a foreign kingdom. Both of them came to the rank of prime minister. Both of them came there through the protection of God. Both of them possessed extraordinary prophetic powers which served to elevate them to high places. Both of them were able to confound all the pretenders and the phonies in those kingdoms.

In spite of all of the Satanic charlatans swarming around the courts of Egypt and Babylon, these two men, because of an uncompromising life, were protected by God, and they were given places of high prominence.

A person who lives an uncompromising life will be elevated by God. Somebody said that politics is the art of compromise. I think that's true. I've often heard people say, and maybe I've said it myself more often than I thought about it, that no one can ever reach a high place in politics today without at least compromising somewhere along the line. And I think basically what should be said is people who are in high places in politics have usually gotten there by compromising. But if God wanted you there and you didn't compromise, He'd put you there. And if you did compromise, then you're there on your own. So, compromise only takes you out of the place of protection.

Verse 10, "And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your food and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse looking than the youths who are of your age? then shall you make me endanger my head with the king."

In essence, the prince of the eunuchs, Ashpenaz, says, "Daniel, I like you a lot. You're a terrific guy. And I'm fond of the other three friends of yours. But I'll tell you, Daniel, I'm afraid of the king. If I don't feed you the king's food, you know what will happen? You'll come out at the end of this three years and you'll be peaked, and pale, and washed-out, and weak, and the king will look at him and say, 'What's the deal here?' And it will cost me my head." Capital punishment.

So, behind the scene lurks the phantom of Nebuchadnezzar, you see. I think it's interesting that Ashpenaz at least takes the time to give Daniel the reason, which shows me that he really did have compassion. He wasn't just barking out orders without any substance. He gives him a reason. He tells him his thinking. As much as he likes Daniel and has compassion, he will not lose his head over this. So, things immediately went into neutral. Daniel got turned down on his refusal to eat the king's food.

Now, listen, Daniel doesn't get rebellious. He doesn't get testy. He doesn't get angry. He doesn't get mouthy. He's firm. He's gracious, but he's very persistent, very, very persistent. He hasn't given up. He's under divine protection and he's looking for another way.

Now, let me sum up those first three points. I want you to get them. When you live an uncompromising life, number one, you have an unashamed boldness. Number two, you set an uncommon standard. And number three, you enjoy an unearthly protection.

I thought I might illustrate those three, just to sum them up, from a portion of a book that I have read and I hope you've read. I've commented on it before it was in print and it is in print now. It's called *A Distant Grief*. It's the story of Kefa Sempangi, that marvelous pastor of the church in Uganda, the church which was so terribly brutalized by Idi Amin before he was removed from leadership. And here is just an excerpt from the book.

This was a particular Easter Sunday when the Christians had been persecuted and terrible things were happening as Amin's Nubian killers were moving out to do everything they could to disrupt Christianity. This is what the writer Kefa says.

"Despite the growing shadow of Idi Amin, Easter morning, 1973, began as a most joyous occasion for the redeemed church. The sun had just risen and the sky was empty of clouds when the first people began arriving at the compound where we worshiped. They came from almost every tribe, from the Baganda, the Besoga, the Banyankole, the Acholi and the Langi, the Bagweri, and the Bagisu. They came from as far away as Masaka, a town 80 miles southwest of Kampala.

"There were old men with walking sticks and young women with babies on their backs. There were small children with flowers in their arms. There were doctors and lawyers, businessmen and farmers, cotton growers and government workers, only a few traveled by car or taxi. Most came on foot or rode bicycles. Others crowded into lorries so lopsided they seemed ready to collapse at any moment. By 9:00, over 7,000 people were gathered. It was the largest crowd ever to attend Sunday service at the redeemed church. When there were no more places in the compound, people climbed trees or sat on the roofs of the lorries. A few large groups set up in nearby yards with their own amplifying systems and hundreds stood in the streets.

“Before the service, the elders and I met in the vestry, an empty house by the compound, to pray. We felt deeply the hunger in the hearts of the people who had gathered for worship. We knew their desire to hear the Word of God and prayed that their lives would be transformed by its power. As we poured our hearts out to the Father in agonizing intercession, desperate scenes from the previous week flashed again in my mind.

“I saw a face burned beyond recognition and a woman huddled in a corner weeping. I saw a crowd of soldiers standing in the park cheering. And I heard the sound of boot crunching against bone. I remembered the arrogance of the mercenaries and the dreamlike deadness of my heart. And once again the triumph of evil overwhelmed me. I felt a deep fear. I myself had fallen, how could I hope to strengthen others on this Easter? Who was I to feed God’s children in this most desperate hour? What words could I speak?

“My brothers and sisters needed courage to stand firm in the growing terror. They needed strength to sustain them in suffering. They didn’t need my sermon. They didn’t need my thoughts on the resurrection. My father had been right. ‘In such times, men do not need words,’ he had said, ‘they need power.’

“I took my Bible and went to preach that Easter morning with new courage. My message was the suffering of Jesus Christ. I spoke of His triumph over evil and His victory over death. I spoke of the power of His resurrection. And behind me were the elders, sitting on a bench and praying. In front of me, thousands of unfamiliar faces. There were believers in need of encouragement and unbelievers in need of salvation. At 12:30 the sun was pouring hot on our heads and I tried to close the service.” That’s three and a half hours later.

“The people refused to leave. ‘We have not come for a church service,’ someone shouted, ‘we have come to hear the Word of God. Go rest yourself and then come back and preach again.’ The crowd clapped and shouted their approval. I went to the vestry for a brief rest and returned in the mid-afternoon. Hardly a person had moved. I preached for three more hours. And this time when I finished, no one objected. The sun was going down and everyone knew the hour had come to close the meeting. It was not safe to travel after dark.

“We didn’t know whether we’d ever see each other again or when God might call us home, but we went out in peace because we had seen with our eyes the salvation of the Lord. And with a loud ‘Amen’ from the people and a final chorus from the choir, the Easter service ended, and I turned to the elders and we embraced, praising God.

“It seemed as if days instead of hours had passed since we had met for prayer. I was exhausted, but there was joy in my heart. God had answered our prayers. He had broken bread and fed His people. I

had to push my way through the crowd, and when I finally arrived at the house, I was exhausted and too tired to notice the men behind me until they had closed the door.

“There were five of them. They stood between me and the door, pointing their rifles at my face. Their own faces were scarred with the distinctive tribal cuttings of the Kakwa tribe, and they were dressed casually in flowered shirts and bell-bottom pants and wore sunglasses. Although I had never seen any of them before, I recognized them immediately. They were the Secret Police of the State Research Bureau, Amin’s Nubian assassins. For a long moment no one said anything and then the tallest man, obviously the leader, spoke, ‘We’re going to kill you,’ he said. ‘If you have something to say, say it before you die.’

“He spoke quietly but his face was twisted with hatred. I could only stare at him. For a sickening moment I felt the full weight of his rage. We had never met before but his deepest desire was to tear me to pieces. My mouth felt heavy and my limbs began to shake and everything left my control. ‘They’ll not need to kill me,’ I thought to myself. ‘I’m just going to fall over. I’m going to fall over dead and I’ll never see my family again.’

“I thought of Penina, home alone with Damali. What would happen to them when I was gone? From far away I heard a voice. And I was astonished to realize it was my own. ‘I do not need to plead my own cause,’ I heard myself say. ‘I am a dead man already. My life is dead and hidden in Christ. It is your lives that are in danger. You are dead in your sins. I will pray to God that after you’ve killed me, He will spare you from eternal destruction.’

“The tall one took a step toward me and then stopped. In an instant his face was changed, his hatred had turned to curiosity. He lowered his gun and motioned to the others to do the same. And they stared at him in amazement but they took their guns away from my face. And then the tall one spoke again. ‘Will you pray for us now?’ he asked.

“I thought my ears were playing a trick. I looked at him and then at the others. My mind was completely paralyzed. The tall one repeated his question more loudly, and I could see that he was becoming impatient. ‘Yes, I will pray for you,’ I answered.

“My voice sounded bolder even to myself. ‘I will pray to the Father in heaven, please bow your heads and close your eyes.’ The tall one motioned to the others again and together the five of them lowered their heads. I bowed my own head but I kept my eyes open.

“The Nubian’s request seemed to me a strange trick. ‘Any minute,’ I thought to myself, ‘my life will end. I do not want to die with my eyes closed.’

“ ‘Father in heaven,’ I prayed, ‘You who have forgiven men in the past, forgive these men also. Do not let them perish in their sins, but bring them unto Yourself.’

“It was a simple prayer, prayed in deep fear, but God looked beyond my fears and when I lifted my head, the men standing in front of me were not the same men who had followed me into the vestry. Something had changed in their faces. It was the tall one who spoke first. His voice was bold but there was no contempt in his words. ‘You have helped us,’ he said, ‘and we will help you. We will speak to the rest of our company and they will leave you alone. Do not fear for your life. It is in our hands and you will be protected.’

“I was too astonished to reply. The tall one only motioned for the others to leave. He himself stepped to the doorway and then he turned to speak one last time.

“ ‘I saw widows and orphans in your congregation,’ he said. ‘I saw them singing and giving praise. Why are they happy when death is so near?’

“It was still difficult to speak, but I answered him. ‘Because they are loved by God. Because He has given them life and will give life to those they love because they died in Him.’

“His question seemed strange to me but he did not stay to explain. He only shook his head in perplexity and walked out the door. I stared at the open door of the vestry for several moments and then sat down on a nearby straw mat. My knees were no longer strong and I could feel my whole body tremble. I couldn’t think clearly.

“Less than ten minutes before, I had considered myself a dead man. And even though I was surrounded by 7,000 people, there was no human being to whom I could appeal. I couldn’t ask Kiwanuka to use his connections. I couldn’t ask the elders to pray. I could not appeal to the mercy of the Nubian killers. My mouth had frozen and I had no clever words to speak. But in that moment with death so near, it was not my sermon that gave me courage, nor an idea from Scripture, it was Jesus Christ the living Lord.”

I’ll stop there. Listen, you live a confrontive, God-honoring, uncompromising life, I don’t care what you face, you’ll have an unashamed boldness. You’ll set an uncommon standard. And God will give you an unearthly protection. Amen? He’s done it in the past. He’s doing it in the present.

That’s not all. There’s more. Number four, an uncompromising life results in an unhindered persistence, an unhindered persistence. I just love this. Now things were in neutral, as I said. Ashpenaz said, “Daniel, I can’t honor your request. The king will chop off my head.”

Well, Daniel, in his wonderful way, gently, without rebellion, without being cantankerous or pushy, just found another alternative. Verse 11. "Then said Daniel to Melzar." Now "Melzar" may be a proper name. However, in the Hebrew it has a definite article with it translated "the." "He said to the Melzar," which indicates that rather than a proper name, it is probably a word to be translated "steward."

Now, Ashpenaz was the prince of the eunuchs. He was over all of these young men in the courts. And he appointed certain stewards to guard certain given ones. And apparently this guy, the Melzar, was given to guard these men. And here is this unhindered persistence of Daniel. If he can't get an answer that he wants from Ashpenaz, he goes to a lower court, which is interesting. He goes to a guy who would have no personal fear of the king because he wasn't really related to the king. His boss was Ashpenaz. And apparently Ashpenaz was a nice enough guy that he wouldn't chop off his head, so Daniel goes to the next guy, "whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah." This is an undaunted spirit.

Now listen, I want to point out something here. An uncompromising spirit never gives up. I want to show you a distinction. There are some people who say, "Well, you know, I know what was really right to do, but I tried to do it, and it just didn't work out, and this is the only alternative I had. Well, you know, I wanted to do what was right, but I was over there with those folks, and they were doing that, and it was really all that I could do, I just had to go along." No. An uncompromising spirit will never be rebuffed from principle when the first door is closed.

I really got the biggest kick out of an article I read this week of a lady who went to the police and asked to be put in jail. And so, they locked her in jail. And they locked her in jail for a period extending past her wedding date. And they wanted to know why and she said this. "I am going to marry a man I shouldn't marry. But every time I see the guy, he's irresistible. So just lock me up till after the wedding." Now that's persistence. She wouldn't compromise even though she had to put herself in jail to restrict her feeling. Some of you gals would do well to take some leads from that dear lady.

But you know what some people do? Some people will superficially exhaust a few resources, then they'll turn to the evil thing and say, "Well, I gave it my best try, it just didn't work out." No. An uncompromising character never gives up, never gives up, never gives up, never gives in.

You know, the apostle Paul, on the way to Jerusalem, he keeps going to Jerusalem, and every once in awhile somebody comes along and says, "Paul, you know what's going to happen to you when you get to Jerusalem. You're going to get in a lot of trouble." And the prophet Agabus comes by and says, "Paul, let me have your belt. Takes his belt and ties his hands up." He says, "Paul, that's what's going to happen to you when you get to Jerusalem."

And as he goes along, he finally says in Acts 20, "Everywhere in every city, people keep telling me I'm going to get in trouble when I get to Jerusalem, but none of these things - " what? " - move me,

because I don't count my life dear to myself, I just want to finish the ministry Christ has given me." When the option closed over here, he went over here. When it closed here, he went over here. He was not looking for an out. He was truly an uncompromising man.

And Daniel was that way. Just because the door was shut at Ashpenaz, he wasn't done. He had an unhindered persistence. People, true character will do that. It just keeps punching, and punching, and punching until it finally finds the hole because it will not compromise. And the steward, apparently, was less threatened by the king and so he wasn't at all unwilling to grant this.

Now, what have we learned? Uncompromising character issues in an unashamed boldness, an uncommon standard, an unearthly protection and an unhindered persistence. Now here's the key. Five, an unblemished faith, an unblemished faith. This is great. An unblemished faith.

You know, Daniel really believed that God would make this possible. Where did he get that confidence? You know what I believe? I believe, as a basic spiritual principle, sin - listen now - sin brings doubt. Purity brings confidence. When a person is living a holy life, I think there's almost a sense of invincibility about that life. You just believe God will deliver. And so, Daniel had an unblemished faith, a sense of being invincible.

You can operate in any trial, you can stand in any trouble or vicissitude, you can be in the midst of any danger, and when your heart is pure, you know there is nothing to fear - for if God be for us, Romans 8, who shall stand against us? Right?

Isaiah 43:2, I love this, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle thee." Why? For "I will be with thee."

When a heart is pure and a life is pure, there is an invincibility that results in this kind of unblemished faith. He really was confident. And so, he said, "I'm willing to risk my neck." Verse 12. "Test your servants - " he says to the Melzar, test us " - I beseech you, for ten days; let them give us vegetables to eat, and water to drink. And then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the youths that eat of the portion of the king's food: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants."

You say, "You know, this is a high-risk operation. If Daniel is really serious about this, he's putting his neck on the line." That's right. But as I said, there is a tremendous confident faith that comes to an uncompromising spirit. When you really believe, you can charge into the very pit of hell with a sense of confidence that God is going to honor your faith.

Daniel was a man of faith. It sprang from a pure heart. Even though he had been through a terrible disaster, even though some, no doubt, had felt that God had abandoned Judah, many questioned, like the prophet Habakkuk, Daniel believed God would stand true to his pure heart. And so, he said, "Just give us vegetables."

By the way, the word vegetables is zara, transliterated Z-A-R-A, and it means to sow, S-O-W, in the ground. It is basically vegetarian food, common food, seeds, vegetables, plants, that kind of thing. It's not so much that there's virtue in a vegetarian diet as it is the food of the poor, who could not afford the meat or the delicacies. "I will eat nothing but the food of the poor, the common food. You feed them the king's food and let's see who looks the best."

Now, let's face it, folks, listen, ten days of vegetables, as over against ten days of the king's food wouldn't prove anything, physiologically. It isn't going to make that big of a difference. Daniel was banking on divine intervention. And I personally believe - and this is just MacArthur talking in the white spaces - all right, but I personally believe God gave him this revelation. I think God gave him this test. And I think God said, "I'll honor this." I think he got this from the Lord because of his tremendous confidence in it and because of the way the Lord responded to it. Unblemished faith. He was willing to risk his neck.

He says, "I'll walk out on the end of a plank. I'll take my stand that God will honor my uncompromising spirit. If I don't eat defiled food, if I eat that which is pure, I believe God will honor me." That's an unblemished faith.

Do you really believe that? Do you believe that if you live an absolutely uncompromising life, no matter who gets angry at you for taking such a firm stand, no matter who gets upset at you because you will not compromise, no matter how many people are offended for your "lack of love," if you take your stand, God will honor it. Do you believe that? Do you believe that if you take your stand against sin and evil, God will fill your life with joy and happiness? Do you believe if you take your stand with honesty, God will fill your life with all those things you need for sustenance and support?

Well, if you really believe it then you won't compromise. You'll take God at His word. So, an unblemished faith. That unblemished faith threw them into point 6, an unusual test, an unusual test. "So Melzar consented to them in this matter and tested them for ten days." Now, let me tell you something, all commitment is tested - James 1, the trial of your faith. All of our faith is to be tested. It's only proven when it's tested. We can say, "I want to live an uncompromising life," and you be ready to believe that God will test it. He'll test it.

You say, "Boy, I'm going to stand - " We do that a lot, you know, we say, "Boy, if I had my way, I'd tell him so. I'd tell him right to the face." And you know what usually happens? Pretty soon you see him face to face and you go, "Ha-na-na-ba-na-ba," see? And you never get it out. And all that courage,

you know, that backyard courage, never seems to get out of the house.

But, Daniel said here, "I'm willing to stake my faith on God's Word." And immediately came the test. All commitment is tested. And so he tested them for ten days. Verse 15 - this is great. "At the end of the ten days their countenance appeared fairer and fatter in flesh - " and "fatter" there doesn't mean fat with fatty stuff, you know, like big jowls or something. Fat was the sign of health, vigor, a shining face, as it were. "They looked better than all the rest of the youths who ate the portion of the king's food."

Now, folks, I just have to tell you, this is the divine intervention of God. In ten days, the physiology isn't going to take that great an effect. I don't know, it may have had some effect. I don't know what they were feeding the people who ate the king's food. But I believe this is God's intervention. And verse 16, "At the end of the ten days - " what happened? " - Melzar took away the portion of their food, and the wine they should drink; and gave them vegetables for the rest of the three years." You don't have to prove anything to him. In fact, if I read the story right, it may be that Melzar ate the king's food for the next three years. I don't know how else he pulled it off. It was a fair exchange for him. He could care less about the vegetables and the water. It was a good deal.

And so what happens? God honored their uncompromising spirits. They had won the battle. They avoided the lifestyle that the Chaldeans wanted to impose upon them. I'm reminded of the words of Tennyson, in Sir Galahad, where he writes a tribute to the righteous knight who found the Holy Grail in these words, "My good blade carves the casks of men, my tough lance thrusteth sure, my strength is as the strength of ten because my heart is pure."

Well, he had a little bit of a spiritual insight in that. Strength comes from purity in the heart. So, they passed the unusual test. Now listen, an uncompromising stand on the Word of God leads to an unashamed boldness, an uncommon standard, an unearthly protection, an unhindered persistence, an unblemished faith, an unusual test - are you ready for this? - an unmeasurable blessing, an unmeasurable blessing. And we're just going to see this quickly. Verse 17. "As for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams."

Where did this come from? "As for these four youths - " watch it " - God - " what? " - gave them." God blessed their uncompromising hearts. God poured out blessing. It's a tremendous thing, people, to realize this, but here brings together the two wonderful truths of God's sovereign blessing and man's total commitment. God blessed sovereignly when they were totally committed to live an uncompromising life.

From their viewpoint, the whole thing depended on their own commitment. From God's viewpoint, the whole thing was entirely in His hands. You can't have one without the other. And God gave them -

and it just sums up various words - "knowledge and skill in learning and wisdom." God gave them all they needed to know for the knowledge and the wisdom that could be applied as they lived in that society.

Babylon was the center of knowledge: Advanced science, libraries of great, great scope. Great scholars lived there. In fact, they were leading the world in those things. God gave them knowledge of that. God gave them knowledge truly of the application of the divine Word of God to the situation. God gave them wisdom, and beyond that, to one of the four - and here's where we separate this one out - Daniel, it says, "had understanding in all visions and dreams."

Here was a guy who could read visions and dreams. Visions are when you're awake and dreams are when you're asleep, and both were a means of revelation from God. Here was a man with a gift of a seer or a prophet. Daniel had a revelatory gift. Daniel was to be the very vehicle of God's divine revelation. And this verse is the setup for the rest of the prophecy of Daniel. He is to be the one to receive God's Word.

And so, God blessed them immeasurably in "knowledge and learning and wisdom." Further, verse 18, "At the end of the days that the king had said they should bring them in, - " that would be three years of training " - then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. And the king conversed with them." And the "them" embodies all these young men that had been deported in 606. The second group hasn't even come yet, till 597, the final group till 586. So, these young men have been groomed in the meantime, and Nebuchadnezzar converses with them. This is the oral exam, see? This is the final test to see how well they had done.

They are personally examined by the king and his assistants. "And among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah." Isn't that great? Those four were summa cum laude. They graduated at the top of the class and they had never defiled themselves. They had never compromised one whit.

You can live in this world an uncompromising life. Do you know that? You can live an uncompromising life in this world that is so pure, and so righteous, and so right, and so full of character that even the world itself has to acknowledge your character and the quality of your life.

The verdict, the end of verse 19. "Therefore stood they before the king." What does that mean, to stand before the king? I pointed it out a couple of weeks ago. It means to serve the king. The angels stand before the Lord. In the Old Testament, we have those who stood before the king, those who stood - the idea of waiting to take the king's message and deliver it, waiting to do the king's bidding, waiting in obedience to his command.

And so, it said these four “stood before the king.” The king’s personal four young men. Imagine, at the age of 17 or 18, being in the royal court, standing along side the king, in a foreign nation, a nation with which you would never compromise a conviction and yet God lifted you up to that very place. Later on, Daniel, without ever compromising, rules in that area as prime minister for 70 years. It can be done, people. Let God lift you up. You live an uncompromising life.

Just how gifted were these young men by God? Verse 20 says, “In all matters - ” I love that “ - in all matters of wisdom and understanding - ” all of them “ - that the king inquired, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.” Now that’s something, isn’t it? Now they had something going for them, God.

You know, it’s amazing, but you as a Christian who have the revelation of God and the indwelling Spirit, are ten times smarter than the smartest person in this country who doesn’t know God. Ten times you’re infinitely smarter because you know the truth, the real truth. Oh, they were blessed in every matter of wisdom and understanding, ten times beyond anybody else.

Listen, beloved, let God lift you up. Let another man come to you, force you to compromise, threaten your life, and you stand true to the Word of God. You stand bold face-to-face. You preach what you believe and don’t let anybody intimidate you. Don’t let anybody make you back down. Don’t let anybody cause you to water down what you know to be the absolute, inviolable truth of God. You hold those convictions. Hold them with love. Hold them with the same gentleness, and the same graciousness, and the same warmth that Daniel did, but never compromising, and God will honor your character and lift you to a place of blessing that will set you head and shoulders above those who are esteemed as the best in your nation and your realm. That’s the message.

What a great word, unmeasurable blessing. Can I add an eighth, a final? An unlimited influence. Oh, this is great. Verse 21. “And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.” Seventy years, seventy years, and you know something? When I see Ezra chapter 1 and all the people going back to Jerusalem, you know who’s behind that? Daniel. When I see the wise men coming from the east, I have to see lurking in the shadows, Daniel.

God gave him influence, influence that led, I believe, to the decree of Cyrus to send the people back to their land. Influence that led to the rebuilding of the wall with Nehemiah. Influence that led to the reestablishing of the nation Israel. Influence that led the wise men to come to crown the King who was born in Bethlehem. He is behind the scenes of the history of the Messiah, as well as the Messiah’s people. He has an unlimited influence, for he it is who brings homage to the King who is the King of kings and Lord of lords, who reigns forever. Daniel has unlimited influence because Daniel has penned in his prophecy the history of the world till the reign of Christ, unlimited influence.

Listen, the blessedness of an uncompromising life, an unashamed boldness that calls us to an uncommon standard, that depends on an unearthly protection. As we set forth an unblemished faith, we face the unusual tests with an unhindered persistence, and we find in response that God brings an unmeasurable blessing, an unlimited influence.

When all is said and done, beloved, the best we can say to you is this. Don't compromise and let God take your life and do with it as He pleases, and it may be ten times greater than the life of anyone in this world. Let's pray.

Thank You, Father, for the freedom we've enjoyed tonight, to gather in this Place and study Your Word, the freedom we've enjoyed in our hearts as our hearts have opened wide to receive it. Confirm in our hearts this is Your truth and may we live it, Father.

Make us loving and gentle as our Lord was, and meek, and caring, and sympathetic, but oh, so firm when it comes to the matter of conviction that in a gentle way, we are absolutely uncompromising, that we may know Your great blessing and the hand of power in our lives that can turn men from darkness to light. So we pray for Your glory in Christ's name. Amen.

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