

Uncompromising Week 1 Better than Babylon

Daniel 1

¹ In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ² And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the vessels of the house of God. And he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his god. ³ Then the king commanded Ashpenaz his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, ⁴ youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to stand in the king's palace, and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans. ⁵ The king assigned them a daily portion of the food that the king ate, and of the wine that he drank. They were to be educated for three years, and at the end of that time they were to stand before the king. ⁶ Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. ⁷ And the chief of the eunuchs gave them names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar, Hananiah he called Shadrach, Mishaël he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego.

Daniel's Faithfulness

⁸ But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank. Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself. ⁹ And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs, ¹⁰ and the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who assigned your food and your drink; for why should he see that you were in worse condition than the youths who are of your own age? So you would endanger my head with the king." ¹¹ Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah, ¹² "Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's food be observed by you, and deal with your servants according to what you see." ¹⁴ So he listened to them in this matter, and tested them for ten days. ¹⁵ At the end of ten days it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's food. ¹⁶ So the steward took away their food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

¹⁷ As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. ¹⁸ At the end of the time, when the king had commanded that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ And the king spoke with them, and among all of them none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah. Therefore they stood before the king. ²⁰ And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom. ²¹ And Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus.

The Big Picture: God is faithful to those who trust in him and following God's ways is better than Babylon's ways.

Truth:

It would have been easy for Daniel to compromise his promise to God by sitting at the king's table. The finest foods and delicacies were offered to Daniel and his friends, and Babylon had defeated Judah. I'm sure it was tempting to believe that Babylon's ways were better than God's.

"Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself..." Daniel fought temptation to break God's laws. He was resolved to follow God. By submitting to the authority of the king by asking permission of the chief eunuch, Daniel suggested a ten-day test between God's food and the king's food. I'm sure it took a lot of courage for Daniel to stand up to the king. Daniel was a captive of Babylon, therefore, he was risking his safety by going against the king. His faithfulness to God could have cost him his life. However, we learn that God does work on Daniel's behalf to protect him/ In a mighty way. Daniel and his friends miraculously got fat on vegetables and water!

Today, we aren't constrained by dietary laws, but there are still plenty of things we face that tempt us to disobey God. Following our own desires and going against God's commands can lead to anxiety, cynicism, anger, and insecurity. Feasting on God's law leads to peace and security.

Philippians 4:8 says: *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*

We are called to set our minds on:

- What is true, instead of the lies of this world ("you aren't valuable," "no one loves you" or "you deserve whatever you want")
- What is honorable, instead of the dishonorable (cheating, lying, stealing)
- What is pure, instead of what will pollute our hearts and minds (pornography & consumerism)
- What is just, instead of what is unjust (objectifying and using people)
- What is lovely, commendable and excellent (not gossip, or sarcastic slander)

Sometimes what we consume through entertainment affects our thoughts. When we consume entertainment that tells us that our identity is in our looks, sexuality, achievement, relationships or anything but being a child of God we can begin to value the wrong things in our lives. When we play video games or look at images on the computer that fan our sinful desires, we can be quicker to compromise and more likely to fall into temptation.

Like Daniel, living in this world will challenge our purity but we ought to resolve to follow the ways of God because God knows what is best for us. Thankfully, God knew we would struggle and that is why he sent Jesus, His Son. Jesus knows and understands our struggles because He faced the temptations of this world yet never sinned (Hebrews 4:15)! God gives us the Holy Spirit to empower us to live holy lives that reflect the holiness of God because God's ways really are better than the ways of Babylon.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

- What does it mean to be holy?
- Jesus is holy, but we struggle with sin and the desire to have what we want more than what God says is best for us. How are you tempted to turn away from God's ways?
- How has feasting on the things of this world affected how you think and feel?
- Do you have a desire to set aside the things of this world in order to follow God? How do you need Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit to seek purity?

Equipping:

- What can we learn from Daniel in today's society? How do you think Daniel would interact in your school or community? How would he be seen?
- What do you think empowered Daniel to live differently than those around him and not give into temptation?
- Remember that God knows that we will make mistakes. The gospel is that we are dependent on Christ for holiness because we are unholy. If we weren't sinners, we wouldn't need a Savior. In the moments when you fall into temptation of this world, how do you respond to God? How should you respond to God?
- You will see in this series that Daniel and his friends rested on a promise and hope that an eternal God would come to their rescue. What great benefit do we have today that Daniel and his friends did not have?

Accountability:

- Often times, the things that we become addicted to don't start out as bad things. However, when we make good things (ex. food, video games, social media, relationships) ultimate things, we can become enslaved to them. What are some good things in this world that you have made ultimate things in order to pursue pleasure and happiness?
- What might the consequences (good and bad) be if you were to give up on the lesser things (that you've turned into ultimate things)?
- What are some of the rules that your world commands you to follow apart from God? What are the areas that are most difficult for you to flee from temptation? Think of some practical ways in which you can turn to God in those moments in order to get strength from him.

Mission:

- What impact do you think Daniel and his friends had on the other youths that were in their situation?
- God doesn't call us to isolate ourselves from this world. In fact, like Jesus, God wants us to befriend those who are different from us. How can you befriend non-Christians and live and act in this world while restraining from becoming like the world?
- Who are some of the people that God has placed in your life that are clearly "living for Babylon"? Has your prayer and desire been for them to know Christ or for you to be more like them?

Supplication:

- Have you been participating in the 6:10 Prayer Initiative? Whatever the case, take some time today to pray for Northview HS.
- Think of people in your school you would like to pray for who live according to this world.
- What areas of temptation will you face this week? How can your discipleship group pray for you this week?

For Further Study:

- Psalm 119:105-112
 - Psalm 119 is the longest chapter of the Bible. It is a poem based on the Hebrew alphabet (it's similar to an acrostic, where each line begins with the same Hebrew letter). The focus of this entire chapter is knowing, loving, and living out God's Word, specifically, the Law. Which of these verses stand out to you the most? Why?
- 1 John 2:15-17
 - In what ways do you sense that your devotion to the world is greater than your devotion to God? What is something that you can do this week to course correct? And is living for God something that you can do on your own power?
- James 1:12-18
 - Verses 14 and 15 paint an alarming picture. We rarely think how being hooked by sin ultimately leads to death. What hope and comfort does the follower of Christ have?