

DECIDING NOT TO COMPROMISE

DANIEL 1

Text:

Introduction:

In the early part of this century, an American ship was wrecked off the Sicily Isles near the coast of England. The sea had been calm and the weather clear, but the vessel was caught in a treacherous current that slowly lured it off its course. Before the captain and the crew realized what had happened, the ship had crashed into the rocks.

In life, powerful currents of compromise can catch us and carry us into a shipwreck. Spiritual drifting is usually a slow and unnoticeable process. We know it has occurred when we have lost the strong resistance to evil and the passionate desire for truth that we once knew.

Often, life is filled with compromises. We are given a choice as to how we will live our lives and what path we are going to follow through life. When we come to these times of decision, it is imperative that we make godly choices. Because the choices we make at the cross roads of life will determine our usefulness to God and our effectiveness.

Our text tonight is about four men who came to a time of decision in their lives.

They could either compromise or go with the flow, or they could stand their ground and live for the Lord.

The circumstances they faced and the decisions they made set the course or the rest of their lives. Since this incident occurred, the names of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego have stood tall as the names of great heroes of the faith.

Who would have ever have heard of Daniel if he had compromised at this early stage of life? His name would be unknown to modern man, and we would never have received this wonderful book. With that in mind, it is good to be able to say that these young men stood their test and as a result, we are all blessed this evening by their example.

As you and I go through life, there will always be times where we are going to have to make decisions to do the right thing.

When these times come, and they most certainly will, we will either decide to go with God despite the cost. Or, we will choose to compromise.

The truths contained in this passage will help us as we face the serious crossroads of life.

Tonight, I would like to speak for a little while on this thought: Deciding Not to Compromise.

My prayer is that we can glean the strength that we need to always make our stand for the Lord.

Notice:

1. THE PROBLEM AT HAND (vs. 1-7)

A. These Hebrew boys faced several problems

Each of these had the potential to derail them and lead them off into spiritual digression.

However, the problems they faced were not that different from those we face daily in our world.

Note:

- A New Home (vs. 1-2)

Daniel 1:1-2

¹ In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. ² And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god.

These boys had been brought up in and around Jerusalem. There they were constantly reminded of their God and of His importance to life. The Temple with its sacrifices was there. The priests and the scribes were there teaching. The prophets were preaching the message of Jehovah. Now, they are slaves and have been hauled off to Babylon. Here, they are surrounded by heathen worship, heathen images and heathen people. It would be easy to conform just to fit in.

Illustration:

For the Christian, the danger is just as real. It is easy to be spiritual in church. It is easy to be godly around godly people. However, when we separate from the godly influences around us, we are placing ourselves in a dangerous position. We are opening up our lives to the possibility of compromise.

- A New Knowledge (vs. 3-4)

Daniel 1:3-4

³ And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring *certain* of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; ⁴ Children in whom *was* no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as *had* ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

These young men were taught a new language and new ways of looking at life. All their lives, they had been exposed to Jewish wisdom. Now, they are being taught the wisdom of Babylon. They are being exposed to things they have never been exposed to before. It is be a dangerous time for them. There is much pressure being exerted on them to conform to the new world around them.

Illustration:

The same dangers face the Christian in this world today. We are constantly being exposed to new ways of thinking and are being told that our way of looking at the world, through the eyes of God in the Bible, is outdated, ancient and intolerant.

There is great pressure being placed on the Christian community to conform to the world's way of thinking. We are told to accept homosexuality, alcohol usage, cursing, promiscuous sexual activity, etc.

- A New Diet (vs. 5)

Daniel 1:5

⁵ And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.

All their lives, these four young men had lived by the dietary laws handed down by the Lord. Now, they are faced with new food. Most likely, this food was unclean, by Jewish standards, and most of the meat had probably been sacrificed to idols. Therefore, it would have defiled these men and made them unclean before the Lord.

Illustration:

As Christians, we too are faced with choices that run contrary to the best that God has purposed for us. There are decisions about our choice of entertainment, our music we listen to, choices in our personal relationships. We are confronted daily by choices to either do or not do certain things that can cause us to be defiled. Now, I am saved, and nothing will ever change that! But, the choices I make in life can either build me up, or tear me down as a servant of God. I can never be lost again, but I can become defiled and put on the shelf by God.

1 Corinthians 9:27

²⁷ But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

- New Names (vs. 6-7)

Daniel 1:6-7

⁶ Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: ⁷ Unto whom the prince of the

eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel *the name* of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego.

When these young men arrived in Babylon, they came carrying wonderful names. Each name carried with it a testimony to the person of God.

- Daniel - God is my judge
- Hananiah - God is gracious
- Mishael - God is without equal
- Azariah - The Lord is my helper

When they arrived in Babylon, they were given new names:

- Daniel became Belteshazzar - Which means, "Bel will protect."
- Hananiah became Shadrach - Which means, "Inspiration of the Sun."
- Mishael became Meshach - Which means, "Belonging to Aku."
- Azariah became Abednego - Which means, "Servant of Nego."

Nebuchadnezzar's goal was to change their identity and hopefully their way of thinking. However, it is plain to see as one reads the book of Daniel, that even though their names were changed their character remained intact.

Notice not only The Problems at Hand but also:

2. THE PURPOSE OF THEIR HEARTS

A. Their Dedication (vs. 8)

Daniel 1:8

⁸ But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

The Babylonians could change their homes, their diet, their names, and their education, but they could never change their hearts! These men had decided that they were going to serve the Lord, whatever the cost! It would have been easy to say, "Well, it's all right, everyone else is doing it!" Or "We had better do what the king says." Or "We'll obey the king outwardly, but we'll just keep our faith to ourselves." These options weren't good enough for these men! They were willing to commit themselves to God's will despite the consequences.

Illustration:

Christians need this same level of determined commitment! Many of us seem to find it too easy to give in to compromise. We need to dedicate ourselves to God and His plan for our lives, even if it costs us our lives! Our duty is to faithfully serve the Lord with all we have.

B. Their Desire (vs. 9-14)

Daniel 1:9-14

⁹ Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. ¹⁰ And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which *are* of your sort? then shall ye make *me* endanger my head to the king. ¹¹ Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, ¹² Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. ¹³ Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants. ¹⁴ So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.

In an effort to maintain their purity before the Lord, they requested that they not be forced to eat the king's meat. They knew they would be fed defiled and defiling foods, therefore, they requested that they be allowed to have vegetables and water for a ten-day period. Daniel and his friends knew that a vegetarian diet would not defile them and they knew that God would

honor their faith in Him. They were willing to put God to the test.

Illustration:

Remember it will not always be the easiest thing, nor will it be the most popular thing for you to take your stand with God. It will not always be understood by those around you. However, it is always the right thing! If we will be willing to stand our ground for the Lord, He will certainly honor our stand and bless us.

These young men made up their minds that they were going to live for the Lord, and they allowed nothing to change them or to turn them from their purpose! As you follow them through the rest of their lives, you see they stuck to their guns more than once. In chapter 3, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were willing to die rather than compromise. In chapter 6, Daniel, an 80+-year old man, risked death in the lion's den rather than compromise in his walk with God. What about us, do we have that same level of resolve and commitment to the Lord and His work? Would you be willing to die before compromising with the enemy?

Note the Problems at Hand and the Purpose of their Heart, but also:

3. THEIR PROMOTION FROM HEAVEN

Note:

A. Their Experience (vs. 15-16)

Daniel 1:15-16

¹⁵ And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat. ¹⁶ Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse.

Daniels experiment worked! God honored His Word and these men were healthier than the others.

These 4 men knew something that many of us never get, and it is this: "If we will do as God says, He will never fail us, even in the slightest way. He will be absolutely faithful to honor His Word and His servants who trust that Word and do as He says.

Lamentations 3:22-23

²² *It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.* ²³ *They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.*

Hebrews 6:13-19

¹³ For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, ¹⁴ Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. ¹⁵ And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. ¹⁶ For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation *is* to them an end of all strife. ¹⁷ Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the

immutability of his counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath: ¹⁸ That by two immutable things, in which *it was* impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: ¹⁹ Which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

B. Their Excellence (vs. 17-20)

Daniel 1:17-20

¹⁷ As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. ¹⁸ Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. ²⁰ And in all matters of wisdom *and* understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians *and* astrologers that *were* in all his realm.

After 3 years, (Notice that they maintained their resolve all during this time!), they stood before the king. When he interviewed them, He found that they were head and shoulders above all the others and that they were 10 times better than his wisest counselors. Again, this reminds us that God honors those who honor Him.

C. Their Endurance (vs. 21)

Daniel 1:21

²¹ And Daniel continued *even* unto the first year of king Cyrus.

We are not told how long Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego served there in Babylon, but we are told that Daniel endured, in a place of power and prominence, for over 70 years. In fact, he was nearing 90 when he faced the lions.

This encourages my heart because it reminds me that no matter how long I live, or where I go in life, if I will always seek to honor the Lord, He will consistently bless me and use me for His glory.

God is always looking for vessels which He can fill up and pour out for His glory. However, to be usable, we have to be clean, and to be clean, we must learn to never be guilty of compromise.

Close:

A giant 400-year-old redwood came crashing down one day, and they could not figure out why. The tree had survived four centuries of storms, lightning, and earthquakes--what had failed it?

On closer inspection, investigators found that tiny beetles had found their way inside its trunk and had begun eating away its life-giving fibers, weakening its mighty bulk from the inside out.

In much the same way, the devil tries to bring Christians down through a steady drone of small,

seemingly insignificant temptations. While we are fighting and resisting him in one area, he may be setting up house in another area of our lives. Satan will find ways to creep into our lives for the purpose of eroding our foundations until our fibers have become undone and we come crashing down to the ground.

Show me a person who has fallen away from their walk with the Lord, and I will show you a person who started making compromises in his or her life long ago.

Are there areas in your life where you have begun to let your guard down?

Are you allowing things in your life that you used to think were wrong?

Where do you find yourself tonight?