

ALWAYS ABOUNDING

DANIEL 1:8; 1 CORINTHIANS 15:58

Text: 1 Corinthians 15:58

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⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Introduction:

We hear much these days about determination. Certainly, determination is a required asset for most any endeavor. If one expects to lose unwanted pounds, they must be determined to do so. If one would develop a thriving business, they must be determined to overcome every obstacle that would keep them from that goal. The realization of one's goals is likely to be in direct proportion to one's determination to achieve those goals.

The potential for war with Iraq is on everyone's mind these days. President Bush has spoken often of his determination to rid our world of the threat posed by Saddam Hussein. That determination is clearly seen in his decisions and actions of recent months. From what I have seen so far, our president has no intention of merely making idle threats in this matter. He is determined to do what he said, even if it means war.

Likewise, our federal government is apparently determined to protect this nation from acts of terrorism. We have witnessed the initiation of all sorts of safety measures at airports, the formation of emergency preparedness plans and contingency plans, as well as an attempt to keep the general public aware of the possible dangers. All of this is taking place because of our government's determination to protect its citizens.

Let me try to encapsulate in one phrase the point I want to make clear today: "Determination determines direction." One's determination, good or bad, determines the direction of one's life, as well as one's choices and actions.

I've said all of that to say this: Daniel was a spiritually determined individual. He had made up his mind to serve and obey God, even if it hair lipped the devil and all of his followers. Daniel would not be dissuaded from his loyalty to God by public opinion or private pressures. He was determined to walk with God. And that's exactly what every child of God should do.

1. DANIEL PURPOSED

A. Daniel's Circumstances

NOTE:

Too often these days, Christians tend to let circumstances govern their closeness to God, when their closeness to God should be governing their circumstances.

Many years ago A.J. Gordon went to the World's Fair. From a distance he saw a man pumping water with one of those old hand pumps. The water was pouring out and he said as he looked, "That man is really pumping water." But when he got closer, he discovered that it was a wooden man connected to a pump powered by electricity. The man was not pumping the water; the water was pumping him.

1. Daniel was a captive

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.

Daniel 1:6

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

2. Daniel was chosen

Daniel 1:3-5

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. 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.

B. Daniel's Conviction

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.

NOTE:

Difference between a conviction and a preference, according to the U.S. Supreme Court: A preference is a very strong belief, held with great strength. You can give your entire life in a full-time way to the service of the preference, and can also give your entire material wealth in the name of the belief. You can also energetically proselytize others to your preference. You can also want to teach this belief to your children, and the Supreme Court may still rule that it is a preference. A preference is a strong belief, but a belief that you will

change under the right circumstances. Circumstances such as: 1) peer pressure; if your beliefs are such that other people stand with you before you will stand, your beliefs are preferences, not convictions, 2) family pressure, 3) lawsuits, 4) jail, 5) threat of death; would you die for your beliefs? A conviction is a belief that you will not change. Why? A man believes that his God requires it of him.

Preferences aren't protected by the constitution. Convictions are. A conviction is not something that you discover; it is something that you purpose in your heart (cf. Daniel 1, 2-3). Convictions on the inside will always show up on the outside, in a person's lifestyle. To violate a conviction would be a sin.

2. DANIEL PROVED

A. By Observation

Daniel 1:10-13

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.

B. His Progress was obvious

Daniel 1:14-15

¹⁴ So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. 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.

3. DANIEL PROSPERED

A. Daniel and His Friends Exercised Special Abilities

Daniel 1:17

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.

B. Daniel and His Friends Enjoyed Special Acceptance.

Daniel 1:18-21

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

