

“THE DANIEL DIET.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Scripture Texts: Daniel 1:8-16

Introduction.

Rivers are a wonderful creation of God. They bless us in countless ways. We are blessed here in Whatcom County to have the Nooksack River. Our agriculture depends on it. All of us depend on it for our drinking water.

All rivers have something in common. They are never naturally straight. Rivers meander and curve and wind their way along. Why is that? Because rivers always follow the path of least resistance. They only flow downhill and as soon as they encounter an obstacle they go around it. Rivers are crooked because they follow the easiest path. You never find a straight and narrow river.

A crooked person is a person who follows the easy way, the path of least resistance, the way of comfort and ease. Our text this evening is about a straight and narrow person and how to be like that.

I don't want to eat my meat, vss. 8-10.

We have seen that Daniel and his friends are fine with cooperating and submitting to the authorities in their new situation. They go along as far as they can, but reserve the right to refuse to compromise their conscience. It is never good to go against your conscience, no matter what the cost. Don't sacrifice your soul on the altar of comfort or convenience or even saving your own neck.

Daniel 1:8 But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank.

But Daniel resolved not to defile himself. This was a thought-out resolution, a decision he had made well in advance.

Remember he is a very young man at this point, 15 to 18. He is ripped out of his country, his culture, his family. He is in a great world capital, in the king's court, surrounded by luxury and the best life could offer.

Is this foolish immaturity? Is this making a mountain out of a molehill? Is this majoring in minors or choosing to die on the wrong hill? Do you suppose other Jews laughed at Daniel's hyper-sensitivity? What harm is there in eating the king's food?

Why does he choose this moment to stand? He didn't resist the Babylonian name or attending the Babylonian university indoctrination program or being part of the political system. So why stop at food and drink? Should he just have said, "When in Rome do as the Romans do"?

What was wrong with the king's food? Why wasn't it good enough for Daniel and his friends?

Some suggest it wasn't kosher, that it was against Jewish dietary restrictions, such as the unclean food in Leviticus 11. Ezekiel suggests this as a possibility (Ezekiel 4:12-15) but then why did Daniel reject the wine since wine was OK?

Some suggest the food may have been offered to idols. Possibly, but why would the vegetables not have been offered as well?

Or there may have been something deeper going on here that Daniel in his wisdom discerned in the king's intentions. There are dangers to the soul here many of us would not see until too late.

The king was setting a snare, a trap, to draw them into his intentions. The king's food and kindness would create a kind of allegiance or loyalty. Daniel saw the dangers of life in the palace, like Moses.

Hebrews 11:24-26 By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, 25 choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. 26 He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

Abstinence in the face of abundance is a noble thing, and certainly much to be commended in our affluent culture.

We live in a culture where the dominate philosophy is "Some is good, more is better and too much is just right."

Think about the Jewish food laws. In the NT we are told we can eat anything God has created. So why did the Jews have so many laws about what they could eat and not eat?

One of the main purposes of all the Jewish laws was to be distinct and separate from the other nations and cultures. Don't do everything they do. Be set apart.

The Jewish law was about maintaining difference and separation, about not becoming compromised and polluted.

Success is more dangerous than failure, riches are more dangerous than poverty, popularity is more dangerous than being lonely.

The king's table was covered with many temptations, many moral and spiritual dangers. A firm stand early on will help one to stand in the face of more severe temptations or threats.

This was not a huge thing like the furnace (3) or the lion's den (6). It was a small thing, but that's just the point. Even small things matter and small things lead to big things. Obedience and faithfulness often starts with small things.

Luke 16:10 "One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.

I want to eat my vegetables, 11-13.

When it comes to eating vegetables kids can often throw quite a tantrum. A couple of our biggest battles in early parenting were over vegetables. At Woodyard family gathering we still recount the epic war of 1994 over sweet potatoes.

So it is interesting that when Daniel was denied his request to eat vegetables he didn't over react, he was not angry, belligerent, stubborn, hostile, threatening. He stood firm without being obnoxious or annoying or condescending or offensive. He simply looked for another opportunity, a different path with a lesser steward.

Daniel shows himself submissive to those in authority by going to the authorities and asking permission. When his request is denied he understands the risk and now must find a way that pleases God and protects those around him. There are times when we seek to please God and man. Daniel came up with a win/win. They wanted improved health and strength and Daniel wanted to remain undefiled.

He showed his trust in God's grace and provision by his patient and peaceful response.

Matthew 6:33 Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

The fruit of good eating, 14-16.

Daniel made his decision and stood by his convictions. He did it in such a way that he left room for God to intervene and act, and he was well rewarded.

God's grace is seen again and again. God gave Daniel favor with his captors, who normally wouldn't care at all, but are willing to work with him, compassion amidst the callousness.

Also the diet showed a remarkable difference in a short time. People don't usually get fat on fruits and vegetables, but God blessed their faithfulness. This is just as remarkable a miracle as the fiery furnace and the lion's den.

God's grace is quietly at work behind the scenes, God's silent sovereignty. When things seem impossible, God works it out; when there is no open door, God opens one. When hearts are hard, God changes them.

God has answered a centuries old prayer prayed by Solomon long ago for God's people if their sin should lead them into captivity.

I Kings 8:48-50 if they repent with all their mind and with all their heart in the land of their enemies, who carried them captive, and pray to you toward their land, which you gave to their fathers, the city that you have chosen, and the house that I have built for your name, 49 then hear in heaven your dwelling place their prayer and their plea, and maintain their cause 50 and forgive your people who have sinned against you, and all their transgressions that they have committed against you, and *grant them compassion in the sight of those who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them.*

Psalms 106:46 He caused them to be pitied by all those who held them captive.

God's great grace in the midst of faithfulness, in seeking the straight and narrow path.

Implications and Application.

The most important verse in chapter one and in some ways the entire book is verse eight. This verse sets the tone for the rest of the book. This verse tells us what kind of person we are dealing with. This verse gives us the heart and soul of the man, a man of integrity, of loyal dedication and commitment to his God.

Daniel's effectiveness and usefulness in the rest of the book stems from this first decision. First decisions often determine future destiny.

Remember Abraham called out of the Ur of the Chaldees to a land he did not know and Moses at the burning bush and David standing up to Goliath.

Had Daniel not made this decision early on, he would never have been in the positions he was in later to make a difference. This is a lesson for all of us and one parents and grandparents should pass on, don't wait till later to be faithful, thinking there will be a better time or opportunity.

Daniel is a model for today. Increasingly we will be called to compromise our spiritual and moral roots. Our world is changing radically and rapidly, we can hardly keep up. We are being pushed to new frontiers in morals and ethics. Abortion, same-sex marriage, living together, polygamy, medical and genetic engineering, political compromises, entertainment choices, legalized drugs, euthanasia pills, and on and on.

Yesterday's taboos are now acceptable and tolerated. Today's non-negotiables will be old news tomorrow. Careless ethics and deceits early in life lead to greater immorality later.

Daniel is a great contrast to Esau. Esau was willing to compromise and even give up his birthright for a bowl of stew. Daniel wasn't willing to compromise or give up his heritage and covenant commitment for the king's meat.

We will have to draw our lines and take our stands whatever the cost, as individuals, families, churches, denominations and a nation.

What will defile us and our beliefs? What are our principles and priorities, our covenant commitments, our vows before God?

Are we afraid that if we live a clearly different life, a life of holiness unto the Lord, that we will lose our friends or family, our job or our status and position? What if living for God causes us to lose out on something the world offers? What will the long run result be?

Consider Daniel who resolved not to defile himself and learn to live with resolve.

One of the greatest examples of this in more recent centuries is the life Jonathan Edwards. In his late teens he began to write a series of resolutions, over 70 of them by the time he was twenty.

“Aware that I am unable to do anything without God's help, I do pray that, by his grace, he will enable me to keep these Resolutions, so far as they are in line with his will, and that they will honor Christ. NOTE: Remember to read over these Resolutions once a week.”

1. Resolved: I will DO whatever I think will be most to God's glory; and my own good, profit and pleasure, for as long as I live. I will do all these things without any consideration of the time they take.

3. Resolved: If ever – really, whenever – I fail & fall and/or grow weary & dull; whenever I begin to neglect the keeping of any part of these Resolutions; I will repent of everything I can remember that I have violated or neglected, ...as soon as I come to my senses again.

4. Resolved: Never to do anything, whether physically or spiritually, except what glorifies God. In fact, I resolve not only to this commitment, but I resolve not to even grieve and gripe about these things, ...if I can avoid it.

5. Resolved: Never lose one moment of time; but seize the time to use it in the most profitable way I possibly can.

6. Resolved: To live with all my might, ...while I do live.

7. Resolved: Never to do anything which I would be afraid to do if it were the last hour of my life.

14. Resolved: Never to do anything out of revenge.

17. Resolved: I will live in such a way, as I will wish I had done when I come to die.

25. Resolved: To examine carefully, and constantly, what that one thing in me is that causes me to doubt of the love of God, even the least little bit; and then to direct all my forces against it.

26. Resolved: To oust away anything I find that diminishes my assurance of God's love and grace.

37. Resolved: To inquire every night, as I am going to bed, where I may have been negligent, what sin I have committed, and how I have denied myself. I will also do this at the end of every week, month, and year.

40. Resolved: To inquire every night, before I go to bed, whether I have acted in the best way I possibly could, with respect to eating and drinking.

41. Resolved: To ask myself at the end of every day, week, month and year, where I could have possibly done better in any respect.

67. Resolved: After afflictions, to inquire in what ways I am now the better for having experienced them. What good have I received by them? What benefits and insights do I now have because of them?

People who live with resolve will not be like crooked rivers, they make straight paths for their feet and for those who follow in their footsteps (Hebrews 12:12-17).