

Danielic Loyalty: The Issue of Gluttony and the Reality of Consecration

by Bryan Anthony

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a consecrated life, characterized by joyful restraint, prevailing prayer, and a commitment to the glory of God, as exemplified by the biblical figure of Daniel.

Scripture: Proverbs 23:20, Daniel 1:8-20, 1 Corinthians 6:19, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Colossians 3:17, James 4:4, 1 Peter 2:9

Topics: "Spiritual Discipline", "Consecration To God"

Description

Bryan Anthony preaches on the exemplary life of Daniel and his friends who chose not to defile themselves with the king's luxurious food and wine, highlighting the importance of maintaining spiritual sharpness and discernment by avoiding overindulgence. Despite being in exile and facing assimilation into Babylonian culture, Daniel and his friends remained consecrated to God, refusing to compromise their loyalty. Their dedication to God's ways, even in the matter of food, led to divine favor, as God granted them knowledge, intelligence, and understanding. Anthony challenges believers to emulate Daniel's commitment to prayer, moderation in eating, and unwavering loyalty to God in the midst of a spiritually dull and compromising world.

Transcript

"But Daniel made up his mind [as did Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah] that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.

.... At the end of the ten days their appearance seemed better and they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating king's choice food.

.... As for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every branch of literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all kinds of visions and dreams." -Dan. 1:8, 15, 17

There is an oft-neglected standard set in forth in the life of Daniel, and it needs especially to be heeded by believers who find themselves living in the prosperous nations of the world. It has to do with the manner of our eating and drinking, and the direct correlation of the level of our spiritual sharpness and discernment. Simply put, those who are given to overeating and overindulgence will be dulled to spiritual realities, and will have no room or capacity for the glorious privilege of the saints; namely, the grace to increase in the

knowledge of God, and the power to set forth His word in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

Daniel and his Hebrew friends (a small remnant out of all those who were taken from Jerusalem during the first installment of Babylon's intrusion) were characterized by a remarkable kind of consecration. It was remarkable indeed, for the majority of their kinsmen were totally duped and swallowed up by the pervasive power of Babylon's table, and these young prophetic men were not willing to have any part of it.

For these ones who were brought to Babylon from Jerusalem to serve in the King's palace, assimilation was the name of the game. Nebuchadnezzar wanted "youths in whom was no defect, who were good-looking, showing intelligence in every branch of wisdom, endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge, and who had ability for serving in the king's court; and he ordered the chief of his officials to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans."

They may have been castrated and made into eunuchs (removing their courage); they were given new names (removing their identities); they were instructed in the knowledge of Babylon (clouding the clarity of the Law of God), and made drunk by the voluptuous power of an unlimited volume of food and wine, straight from the King's reservoir. Daniel and his friends endured all of the hellish transition, but they reached a point where they could not buckle any longer. They were willing to submit to the changes that were placed upon them in the sovereignty of God, but when it came to the table of Babylon, and the dulling effects of luxurious food and copiously flowing wine, they boldly and humbly drew the line in the sand.

Daniel "made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank." This was not merely an issue of the Law, which is to say, refraining from the eating of unclean animals. This was an issue of protecting the inward prophetic distinctive of his own purpose and existence as a young Hebraic man. This little remnant of four souls had maintained a union with the God of Israel, though all of their kinsmen had fallen under the sway of Babylon's way of life.

The land of exile was to be for some of the exiles the land of opportunity.

(Daniel: OTL, Norman Porteous; Westminster John Knox Press, 1965)

It may have been the "land of opportunity" and promotion for those who lacked the iron-core of prayer and the moral grit of loyalty to Yahweh, but it was a land of radical delusion and compromise to the one who had "made up his mind that he would not defile himself." Daniel knew that he could not transgress against the union he had with the Lord, and because he jealously guarded that union, the Lord put him high places to set forth the truth of the Kingdom.

There is a note that needs to be sounded along these lines, for the Church in this age is being mostly swept up in a manner similar to the majority of the exiles. There are too few Daniels in our midst, and as infrequently as we hear it addressed, the issue of our food and drink plays a staggering part in dulling our hearts to the reality of God, and sweeping us away in the tides of lust and sinful pleasure.

How is it that Daniel was able to endure losing his Hebrew name (which was so charged with meaning), being indoctrinated by Babylonian thought and spirituality, and becoming a eunuch (if indeed he did), but when it came to the issue of food and drink he was unwilling to give his soul over to its alluring power?

There is something terribly amiss in our Christian culture, when so many of our members are obese, given to excessive eating, and lusting after food in the same way that men lust after women. I am suspicious of

the whole phenomenon of buffets and "all-you-can-eat" establishments, most of which are filled to capacity on Sunday afternoons. There is something telling about our dissatisfaction with God when we flock to these restaurants, making multiple trips to the buffet, and straining our intestines in pursuit of fulfillment and pleasure. Is there something lacking in our union with God, and since our drab Sunday meetings haven't met that lack, are we compelled to turn to "comfort foods" for some type of satisfaction? The practice of overeating, which is so common to believers in the Western world, is a revealing sign that we have not been satisfied with the table of the Lord, with the fellowship that He gives, with the "food" that Jesus ate of; that is, doing the will of the Father.

Daniel and his friends stepped away from the table of Babylon and its stultifying influences, for they did not want their inward loyalty to the Lord to be diluted. They were jealous for His glory, and jealous to keep their hearts with all diligence, for a blurred heart cannot abide in the counsel of the Lord, and this was the chief desire of these four remarkable young men.

Not only were they preserved in terms of health, but "God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every branch of literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all kinds of visions and dreams."

There is something here to be said for the man who will take thankfully only what is needed of food and drink, "setting his heart upon" the place of prayer, totally unwilling to break from a union with the Lord, totally unwilling to give sway to the spirit of this age. Daniel is a unique prototype for us along these lines, and we need not to hold his example off at a distance as some rare historical episode, but to examine our own lives and press into the Lord for the grace to walk in this kind of consecrated reality.

How shall we function in the various types of "Babylonian" atmospheres that we find ourselves in? Are we willing to step away from the table, to take only what is required for sustenance, and to give our lives over to the spirit of prayer? This is not to say that we will cease to enjoy good tasting things. That is not the point at all. We know the difference between enjoying a meal with grateful hearts, and having a lawless blowout of a meal that dulls our spiritual senses.

If we have given our bodies and souls over to excessive eating and drinking, it can be certain that we have robbed ourselves of the kind of divine clarity, holy knowledge, and revelational insight that the Lord only gives to those who "set their hearts" upon Him. It is not an issue of asceticism, legalism, or striving in a fleshly religious sense. It is an issue of being set apart in the inner-man for the eternal purposes of God.

Daniel's dogged determination in the area of food clearly played a role in opening his spirit to the realm of God, and it will be no different for the believer in these last days. There is a sharpness and priestly coherence that comes to the one who pushes away Babylon's overflowing plates and chalices, and gives himself to the Danielic mode of being; namely, a life of joyful restraint, prevailing prayer with fasting, and living ultimately for the glory of God.

If we would overcome the spirit of this age and glorify the Son of God in these days, we must adopt this mode of being. There is no other way to come into the prophetic and apostolic reality that the Scriptures have set forth. And a Church which lacks that reality has fallen short of the glory of God.

Source:

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