

A Young Man Who Decides to Say 'No'

by Denis Lyle

Denis Lyle's sermon emphasizes the importance of standing firm in one's faith amidst cultural pressures, as exemplified by Daniel's resolve in Babylon.

Scripture: Proverbs 16:7, Daniel 1:8, Romans 12:2, Hebrews 11:32, 1 John 2:17, 1 John 5:4

Topics: "Standing Firm", "Faithfulness"

Description

Denis Lyle preaches on the story of Daniel, a young man who courageously decides to say 'NO' to conforming to the ways of Babylon despite facing immense pressure. Daniel's unwavering faith and commitment to God's principles in the midst of a new land, new curriculum, new culture, and religious challenges serve as a powerful example for believers today. By purposing in his heart to stand firm, Daniel not only overcomes the trials but also becomes an inspiration and influence, showcasing the blessings and favor of God upon those who honor Him.

Transcript

Reading: Daniel 1: 3-21 2. A YOUNG MAN WHO DECIDES TO SAY "NO " Many years ago Premier Khrushchev was speaking before the Supreme Soviet and was severely critical of the late Premier Stalin. While he was speaking someone from the audience sent up a note, "what were you doing when Stalin committed all these atrocities" Khrushchev stopped and shouted, "who sent up this note" Not a person stirred. "I'll give you one minute to stand up". The seconds ticked away. Still no one moved.

"All right I'll tell you what I was doing. I was doing exactly what the writer of this note was doing... exactly nothing. I was afraid to be counted". Daniel was a teenager in the year 605 BC when Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem and began his conquest of Judah. So here's a teenager a 1,000 miles away from home in a new country/climate/culture with all the might of Babylon, all the policy of Nebuchadnezzar against him "but Daniel purposed in his heart... "(1:8) My, here is a young man who decides to say " NO."

Now sometimes it is easy to say "no", at other times it is not. "No", is a frequently used word in the vocabulary of parents. "No, no", we tell little children. " Can I stay out late tonight", the teenager asks. "No", we respond without much thought. "But why not" " Don't ask why not the answer is no!" For those of us who are parents " no", comes easier than "yes." At other times, however "no", is difficult to say. This is especially true when we are under pressure to say " yes".

You see, one of Satan's strategies is to get us to say "yes", to sin. In fact, this was his temptation in the Garden of Eden. God had given Adam and Eve clear instructions about the garden. He told them they could eat freely of the fruit of all the tree's of the garden, except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But Satan came along, and Adam and Eve said "yes", instead of "no". Do you know something Satan has not changed his strategy since the garden. He wants us to say "yes", to temptation.

Indeed as we look at this opening chapter in Daniel's life we are struck by: (1) THE PRESSURE DANIEL FELT Can you imagine 4 Hebrew boys being snatched away from godly homes in Jerusalem and being moved to far away Babylon You see, it was the practice of Babylon to deport "the cream of the crop", and train them for services in their palaces. Can you see from (1:4) what fine specimens these 4 lads were They were Physically strong and handsome: they were Socially experienced: they were Mentally sharp and well-educated and they were Spiritually devoted to the Lord ... they were perfect examples of teenagers. (Lk 2:52) But what a difficult trial lay ahead for them!

The King wanted them to force them to Conform to the ways of Babylon. He was not interested in putting good Jews to work. He wanted these Jews to become Babylonians... he wanted to render obsolete the principles upon which these teenagers were reared. Do we not face the same thing today Satan wants us to become "conformed to the world". (Rom 12:2) He tells us "when in Babylon (Rome) do as the Romans do". My, the world wants us all to have the same standards its standards: to accept the same beliefs its beliefs: to visit the same places its places: to do the same things its things!

Sad to say many believers give in to the world: flesh: and devil and lose their power: joy: testimony. Peer pressure in our schools: colleges: universities and we must pray for our young folk that they resist the pressure to conform! Now there was the pressure Daniel felt: (a) GEOGRAPHICALLY: The pressure of a NEW LAND. (1:2) Here he was a 1000 miles away from home, no longer surrounded by the godly environment of Jerusalem, no longer had he the influence of godly parents and teachers, he was a long distance from home.

Sometimes when some believers get away from home they rejoice at the opportunity to "let down the bars and live it up". No doubt Satan whispered in Daniel's ear, "You're in Babylon now, do as the Babylonians. Daniel you're a long way from home, no one will ever know". Has he ever whispered like that in your ear Young people when you leave home for University: further education: a career: to get married there will come the pressure just because you are in a new land or culture to let down the guard.

Do you know that's why we need to be careful on holiday A new land and a new culture and the devil says, "let down the guard and live it up". (a) (b) INTELLECTUALLY: The pressure of a NEW CURRICULUM. You see the King wanted the cream of the crop. Why So that they might be taught the "learning and the language of the Chaldeans". (1:4) So here is Daniel now enrolled in the University of Babylon for three years, the King hoping that this "brain washing", would make better servants out of them.

You see this was a three year education and indoctrination program planned for them, a classic picture of brainwashing! Sometimes its necessary for young believers and older Christians to be exposed to teaching which is unbiblical and anticbiblical in this secular society, but its not necessary for them to be swallowed by it, for God can give the ability to withstand the pressure of a secular college system. There is always an Authority Crisis isn't there Who are we going to believe God or the devil Out young folk go off to secular universities face a secular mentality and a secular education.

They walk into classrooms where all too often the Professors goal is to shake them from their Christian faith, change the source of authority in their lives and remove them from the Word of God and get them to lean on the wisdom of men. Young folk... don't abandon the Word of God for the Wisdom of men! (a) (b) (c) SOCIALLY: The pressure of a NEW CULTURE: (1:5) The word "meat", means "delicacies or dainties". In other words Daniel and his friends were to eat not only necessary food, but the very best, similar to that which the king ate.

You say, "well, whats the problem with that" Just this. The kings diet was probably contrary to the dietary law of the Jews (Lev 11:44-47) Also, the food that was set before Daniel had been sacrificed to the false gods of Babylon, thus for Daniel to eat was to acknowledge these heathen deities. My, here was a young man who could discern the fact that the Babylonian culture was in conflict with the Word of God. And he had the maturity and moral courage to say a firm "no", to cultural pressures!

You see Satan wants to change our appetites. He wants us to develop appetites for the things of this world instead of the things of God. He wants to give us a craving for gold instead of God, for the material instead of the spiritual. He wants us to be more interested in earth than heaven. We are subject to constant brainwashing through the media, music, television, books and magazines. We undergo constant pounding to give us appetites for the immoral ways of this world. Do you know the reason Look at (1:5) The problem was that it was the wrong king.

We must make up our minds which king we want to stand before! When I was lot younger I used to see people walking down the street with a big-sandwich board sign. One of these signs read like this, "I am a fool for Jesus". People would look and laugh. Then they would look on the backboard. It said, "Whose fool are you" My, which king are you serving Have you sold out to Christ and are standing before God's king, or have you sold out to Satan and are standing before the prince of this world Did you notice the pressure Daniel faced: (d) RELIGIOUSLY: Look at (1:6-7) Now obviously there were more than four.

Why are the others not mentioned Was it because when the pressure came they caved in When the testing time came did they fail the test Did they give into pressure because they would not pay the price and so their names are not mentioned in God's Word Well, Nebuchadnezzar decided to change their names. Why To try and remove from the hearts: minds: and wills of these young men any commitment to God! Each of the four original names contain some form of the name of Jehovah. Daniel...

God is my Judge: Hananiah... Jehovah is gracious: Mishael... Who is He that is God: Azariah... the Lord is help: Daniel was changed to Belteshazzar, "Bel protect my life". Hananiah to Shadrach, "I am fearful of god". Mishael to Meshach, "I am despised before my god." Azariah to Abednego, "servant of Nebo". Everything that reminded them of Jehovah the enemy sought to change! My, has Satan's strategy changed in this 21st century No! He still subjects us to tremendous pressure.

Whats his purpose To conform us to this world. To remove every form of spiritual vestige from our lives! Vance Havner says, "The early believers were strangers in Babylon we have become citizens in Babylon. Even in so called evangelical circles the new angle is to get chummy with Sodom play up to Rome and hobnob with Babylon." (2) THE MEASURE DANIEL TOOK Here he is enrolled in the University of Babylon, his name has been changed, his food is from the kings table. The Babylonians have changed his home: his text-books: his menu: his name, but they could not change his heart.

Look at (filed and not to be eaten by Jews. In Babylon all wine was offered as a toast to the gods. All meat was offered to Bel-Merodach or one of the gods of Babylon. To eat such food meant a sacrifice of spiritual

conviction. It made acknowledging a pagan god. "But Daniel... " I believe that Daniel had a daily quiet time. There was a time each day when he meditated on the Word of God and studied God's Word! And from that spiritual reservoir he drew convictions that enabled him to make a right decision when the crisis came.

My, do you have a daily quiet time Sometimes people say, "I've been reading my Bible, but I've not been getting much of it". What they usually mean is that they have not been getting the feeling they want. Is that your problem Don't worry about the feeling: just keep on reading God's Word, keep hiding it in your heart. And from that inner reservoir of God's Word the principles will emerge to give you spiritual, scriptural guidance when crisis times come. "But Daniel purposed in his heart...

"We need to do that: 1. In the Moral Climate of Corruption: Can you imagine the conversation that went on in the dormitory in Babylon One of his peers might have said, "listen Daniel we're a long way from home. Noone will know or care what you do here". Another might have said, "come on Daniel, its just a little thing. It's just a little drink". Still another might have said, " Now Daniel lets not get too legalistic about this. You can carry that sort of thing too far". Everybody else was eating the kings meat, but Daniel said " Not I".

Everybody else was drinking the kings wine but Daniel said, "I won't do it". My, do you have the courage to say no when everybody else is doing something questionable or sinful Here's how it works. Your friends are all drinking. They urge you to join in. They tell you that a little drink is not going to hurt you. They threaten to ostracise you. But say no, and keep on saying it and you will stay sober all of your life. You never will become an alcoholic. I tell you no is the most effective word in the English language.

The same is true of drugs and sex. You say no and you never will become an addict. You say no and keep saying no and when you get married you will be pure. Young people, let me encourage you in the power of Christ to say no. You are starting, my child, on life's journey Along the grand highway of life You will meet with a thousand temptations, Each city with evil is rife This world is a stage of excitement There is danger wherever you go But if you're tempted in weakness Have courage my child, to say no.

Be careful in choosing companions Seek only the brave and the true Stand by your friends when in trial Not changing the old for the new When by false friends you are tempted The taste of the winecup to know With firmness, with patience and kindness, Have courage my child, to say no." 2. In the Doctrinal Climate of Confusion: Don't sell the truth. Say with Nehemiah, "So did not I because of the fear of God". (5:15) 3. In the Ecclesiastical Climate of Compromise: Make you your mind if you are going to be a fundamentalist to stand for the principle of separation.

Resolve in your heart that you will obey God no matter what the cost. (a) (b) THE REQUEST ON HIS LIPS: Look at (1:12) Daniel said, "we'll go vegetarian for ten days and at the end of ten days check us out". Now I want you to notice something very important here. Having purposed in his heart, Daniel proceeds with wisdom and courtesy. Someone has said, "prudence, politeness and pluck are a grand trio". Did you notice Daniel did not "fly off the handle". He did not rant or rave.

My, we may have convictions without being cranks. He made a perfectly sensible request, " give us ten days. The "boss", says we are going to lose weight and colour if we don't eat his rich food. We'll put us on the scales after ten days". The head servant agreed for " when a mans ways please the Lord He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him". (Prov 16:17) So Daniel went to Weight Watchers for ten days! What this not tremendous faith in God Daniel was certain that God would honour his stand that he makes this proposal!

You see, it not only takes obedience to overcome the pressures of this world, it takes faith. " this is the victory that overcometh the world even our faith". (1 Jn 5:4) Its not just "obey", its "trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus..." Did you notice the consequence of Daniel's actions (c) THE RESULT UPON HIS FACE: Look at (1:15) "fairer and fatter..." They looked at their eyes and their eyes were clearer than the rest of the boys: they looked at their faces and their faces were more radiant than the rest of them.

Their muscles were stronger, their posture was more erect. There was a difference in their countenance. Do you see that boy over here That boy has decided to live his life for sin and Satan. Look at this boy here. He has decided to live for the Lord. The devil gets hold off one life and the Lord gets hold off another. Follow them on down the road. Look at them ten or twenty years from now. See the face of the first one as the signs of sin begin to make deep grooves in his face.

Do you see the guilt and emptiness in his eyes That is what the devil does to a life. But the other has a sparkle in his eye and a spring in his step. Daniel takes a courageous stand and everything turns out wonderfully! (3:18) But it does not always work out that way! Sometimes you take a stand for God and as a result you lose your job. Sometimes you take a stand for God and you lose all your friends. Sometimes you take a stand for God and you suffer financial or personal loss.

My, doing right does not guarantee a good result. But we are to do right whatever the consequences. (Heb 11:32:34) The story is told about some young people who walked into a high school class that was taught by a godless professor. In one of his lectures he said, "Will all of you who believe the myths of the Bible please stand" Several stood. Then he added "Now this semester I am going to free you from this religious Bible nonsense. I have read the Bible, and it is certainly written by bunch of mixed up men".

One young Daniel spoke up, "Sir, the Bible is God's letter to Christians, and if you are confused its because you're reading somebody else's mail". Will you dare be a Daniel in school: university: work: home There's an unchanging principle in the Word of God and its this, " them that honour me I will honour". Look at: (3) THE FUTURE DANIEL HAD Did you notice this significant phrase in (1:21) "And Daniel continued". Indeed he did. Satan must have whispered in his ear, "you had better follow the crowd if you want to stay around here Daniel".

But Daniel obeyed the Lord and he stayed around longer than anyone else. John says, "he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever". (1 Jn 2:17) The future Daniel had: (a) WAS INSPIRATIONAL: The breath and blessing of God was upon him. My, can you see not that in this very chapter Look for example at: 1. The PEOPLE God gave Daniel: (1:9) Although the Prince of the eunuchs was not a believer in God, God used him and made him a blessing to Daniel. "the kings heart is in the hand of the Lord...

He willeth". (Prov 21:1 Gen 39:1-6) 2. The PERCEPTION God gave Daniel: (1:17) If you look at the margin of (1:17) it says "and God made Daniel understand". God did it, God gave him, and them all they needed. 3. The PROMINENCE God gave Daniel: (1:20) They were top of the class. Ten times better: ten times smarter. My, it pays to stand for God: to walk with God: for "them that honour Me I will honour". (a) (b) WAS INFLUENTIAL: Look at (1:21) Will you link that to (1:8) "But Daniel purposed in his heart".

Daniel lived through the remainder of the Babylonian Empire and on into the Empire of Persia. Think of all the in fighting that goes on in high government circles. Think of all the attempts made by his jealous peers to sabotage his position. Think of the various changes of administration. When they were all gone, there was Daniel, still on top. "For the world passeth away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God

abideth for ever". (1 Jn 2:17) Did you see that reference to Cyrus, the first Persian emperor It was he who wrote the decree that released the Jews from bondage and allowed them to return to their own land.

The first chapter of Ezra tells us about that. My, its possible that Daniel's last official act was to prepare the papers releasing his people from Babylonian bondage! Oh, decide in your heart to live for the Lord, and God might use you one of these days to be the means of setting a multitude free from the bondage of sin! " And Daniel continued". Can you imagine the tower of strength and star of hope he brought to the captives during those dark and difficult days of the exile.

They must have thought, "Well, dear old Daniel is still with us. You can imagine it can't you" "And Daniel continued". Do you know something We are exiles also. We do belong to this world. We are in it, but we are not of it. We are off the Jerusalem that is above and we are going there some day... our captivity is going to be ended. But at the moment we are exiles, away from home in a foreign land! My, how are we to conduct ourselves in the Babylon of this world The way Daniel conducted himself and if we do that what towers of strength and stars of hope we will be.

" Daniel purposed in his heart", (1:8) Barnabas " exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord". (11:23) My, this is the golden rule for exiles until the exile is over and we see His face!

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