

Lessons From Daniel

by William MacDonald

The sermon teaches that God is over all, and we must have the courage to say no to the world's temptations and observe the chain of command in order to stand out for God.

Duration: 42:14

Scripture: Psalm 34:8, Proverbs 21:1, Proverbs 22:29, Daniel 1:8, Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:28, 1 Corinthians 10:13

Topics: "Daniel"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the dark days in Israel described in the first two verses of the Bible. The people of God are in captivity in Babylon under the rule of Nebuchadnezzar. Despite their circumstances, the young Hebrews remain calm and composed. They refuse to eat the king's food and instead opt for a simple diet of vegetables and water. God is shown to be in control throughout the story. The speaker emphasizes the importance of standing for God and living a life separate from the world's ways. He compares the Hebrews' situation to the challenges faced by Christians today, such as standing for the truth of God in the school system. The speaker concludes by reminding the audience that life is a training ground for reigning with God, and one day believers will stand in the presence of the King.

Transcript

Chapter 1, and I think we'll read this portion. In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, came Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem and beseeched him. The Lord gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into his hands a part of the vessels of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar, to the house of God, into the treasure house of his God.

And the king spake unto Ashkenaz, 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, children in whom was no blemish, but well favored in skill, and 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. 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.

And among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave name, for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar, and unto Hananiah of Shadrach, and unto Mishael of Meshach, and unto Azariah of Abednego. 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 teach him.

Now God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. 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. Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days, and let them give us pulp to eat and water to drink.

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

Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat and the wine that they should drink, and gave them pulp. 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. 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, 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, and in all matters of wisdom and understanding that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm. Daniel continued even unto the first year of King Cyrus. Now when we read those first two verses of this chapter, it seems quite calm, everything's peaceful, and things seem to be moving along smoothly.

But if we read it that way, that's not the way it was. Actually, the invaders had come into Israel, they'd carried off the king, and they'd carried off many of the people. To get an idea of what it's like in the first two verses of this chapter, just imagine if the Russians invaded the United States and took off these young people.

How would you feel tonight? I tell you, those first two verses are describing dark days in Israel. And you really have to know that background to get something of the feel of it. And these people, the people of God, are in captivity in Babylon.

They've been carried off to Babylon to a foreign land, and they're under a foreign tyrant whose name is Nebuchadnezzar. But one of the remarkable things is that these young Hebrews act with perfect poise. I want to tell you, if there's any panic, if there's any frenzy in the early chapters of Daniel, it isn't with these Hebrew fellows, it's with Nebuchadnezzar himself.

That's wonderful. These fellows were men of faith, and they were men of courage. They were men who had backbones for God, and their trust was in the living God.

What a lesson for us today. When I think of this circumstance here, I realize that God is over all. God is over all in the affairs of his people, and he rides upon the storms of life.

I tell you, there's a lovely hymn in our hymn book. It's number 508. It's an old hymn, but it's really hard to beat it.

It says, God moves in mysterious ways his wonders to perform. He plants his footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm. Isn't it wonderful? Dear friends tonight, we have a God.

He isn't under the storm. He's not underneath it. He rides upon the storm.

He makes the storm do his will. And the second verse is really precious, and this might be a word from God to some troubled heart here tonight. Ye fearful saints, fresh-couraged saints, the clouds you so much dread are ripped with mercy and shall break in blessings on your head.

Isn't that wonderful? It really is. Ill that God blesses is our good, and unblessed good is ill. And all is right that seems most wrong if it is his good will.

And I notice in this passage of Scripture that Daniel and his three friends, they didn't say, well, we'll wait till circumstances improve, and then we'll start to serve the Lord. No, they said, where we are, we are by the permissive will of God, and we'll live for God right here and right now. The second lesson I see in this chapter is this, that the king's heart is in the hands of the Lord.

As the rivers of water, he turns it with it soever he will. That's wonderful. Wonderful to see these Hebrew fellows walking by faith in God.

And wonderful to see God influencing the heart and the emotion and the intellect of the chief of the eunuchs, isn't it? So God is over all, and God is working all things out for good to them that love him. I know that that verse is a problem for many people. All things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to his purpose.

What good could possibly come out of this? You know, I think we put the period in too soon. What does it mean, all things are working together for good? The next verse explains what it means. He's working all of this to conform us to the image of his Son.

That's what it is. And that takes care of all the seemingly adverse circumstances in life. See, doesn't it? That's been a tremendous help to me.

Not just the favorable things that happen in life, but the unfavorable ones as well. God is using them. God is tarnishing them to conform us to the image of his beloved Son.

And that's the good, that God is working for those who love him. And I see him working on the hearts of these heathen monarchs here in the Old Testament. He's doing it today too.

Things haven't changed a bit. Notice in verse 5 that these young Hebrews were prepared for three years to stand before the king. Just think of that.

Of course, he was the world tyrant of that time. And these fellows are going through a course, what shall we call it, a course of culture? I think so. That's what it was.

They were being taught how to groom themselves. They were being taught how to behave in the presence of the king. They were being taught how to speak when they were in the presence of the king.

And it took how many years? It took three years. You know, you and I are in God's school right now. You know what we're being trained for? We're being trained to stand in the presence of the king.

That's what it's all about. That explains the things that happen to us in life. That explains the tears.

That explains the floods and the blood and the heartache and all the rest. Lifetime is training time for reigning time. And one day we're going to go in to see the king in his beauty.

And one day the Lord Jesus is going to present the church to himself without spots or wrinkles or any such thing. There won't be anything that would be comparable to a mole or a wrinkle or a beauty spot or a wart or anything like that in the spiritual realm. And I tell you, that's pretty wonderful when you think where he found us.

Pretty wonderful when you think of the raw materials he had to work with. And to think of the Lord Jesus coming down to Death Valley and taking us up there and working on us, you know. And putting us through this course of beauty culture.

Spiritual beauty culture. The one day stand before him in the court above. I'll tell you it's wonderful.

The king there in his beauty without a veil of sin. And where a well-spent journey those seven deaths lay between. The lamb with his fair army doth on Mount Zion stand.

And glory, glory dwelleth in Emmanuel's land. And those of us who are saved by the grace of God are going to be there just as surely as the Lord Jesus Christ himself is there. I want to be a good student in the school of God.

Don't you? I want to be responsive to his impulses. I want him to keep me teachable all the days of my life. I never want to have the feeling that I've arrived.

Satisfaction is the grave of progress. Not that I've already attained or arrived. I press for the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Now when you come down to their name in verse six. You know that every one of their names has the name of God in it. You've noticed that haven't you? Daniel.

L. That's the name of God. L. God is my judge. Hananiah.

That I-A-H. That's the name of Jehovah. Hananiah.

The grace of Jehovah. Mishiel. That means there's the L again.

E-L. That means who is like God. And Azariah.

That means helped by Jehovah. Well you know the names in the Bible stand for the person. The names in the Bible stand for the person.

When we speak about the name of Jesus we mean the person of Jesus. And these fellows had God in their name. What it really means is that they had God in the center of their lives.

That's what it means. It was significant that God was in their name. Now of course the heathen come along.

The prince of the eunuchs come along. And they want to give them some other name. And so they do.

They give them other names. And I believe that every one of these names they gave had the name of an idol in it. The name of a false god in it.

Beltshazzar has the name of Bel in it. That's the same as Baal. And Shadrach.

It means the command of the moon god. And Meshach. I don't know exactly what the name of the god here is.

It means who is what thou art. And Abednego means the servant of Nego or Nebo. One of the idols.

One of the idolatrous images of that time. Listen. The prince of the eunuchs could change their name.

But he couldn't change their character. You know. The world can give us all kinds of names.

You go to school. You go to university. I sat in a university one day and witnessing to the fellow next to me.

And he said with the most icy hot hair. What are you? A chryser? He said. I had never heard that word before.

But I fled guilty. The king. The prince of the eunuchs.

He could change their name. But he couldn't change their character. But that's what the world tries to do.

The world tries to pour us into its mold. Doesn't it? That's what he was trying to do. And that's what the spiritual significance of this is.

The prince of the eunuchs was trying to get these guys to conform. You know. Just be a part of the herd.

Don't cause any ripples. That's what we had in the song tonight, wasn't it? Exactly right. Exactly right.

And when I come to this, I can't help thinking of that lovely translation by Philip of Daniel 12. I think that verse is worth the price of a whole book. Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its mold.

But let God remold your mind from within. Isn't that beautiful? Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its mold. But let God remold you from within.

And I want to tell you the pressures on people today are enormous. The pressures on young people in high school and college and university, they're tremendous. And what does the world try to do? Exactly that.

Compromise. Get us to conform. And you run against this all the time.

And the Lord Jesus had that. That was part of his experience in life. And when they met the Lord Jesus, they met somebody that refused to conform.

And I'm thankful to say that God has his people like that today. And that's one of the central lessons, of course, of this chapter. Verse 8a.

Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with a portion of the king's meat. They said, oh, come on. Eat our food and join the beauty contest.

Ditto. What was the matter with the food? Well, first of all, these fellows were Hebrew fellows and they were under the law of God. And the law of God forbade that they should eat lobster Thermidor or shrimp Creole or roast rabbit.

No, no. That was unclean food. And not alone that, but it's very likely that the food that came out of that royal kitchen had already been offered to idols.

Now, Daniel and his friends, they could have rationalized their way out of that, couldn't they? They could have rationalized it. Everybody's doing it. So what difference if nobody would know? The folks back at the synagogue didn't know.

And even if we eat it, God knows in our hearts that we're not vowing, you know. Even if we should eat it, God knows that our hearts are right toward him. But I thank God for these fellows.

I thank God for Daniel. He purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the force of the kingdom of Jesus. Thank God for a man of conviction.

Thank God for a man who would rather go to heaven with a good conscience than stay on earth with a bad conscience. Thank God for a man who'd rather burn in temporal fire than burn in the eternal fires of hell. That was the choice he had to make all through his life.

He was a man with signs, and he was a man with backbone. And I'll tell you, when God finds a man like that, he honors him, as that man is never the loser. I see also in this chapter that these men dared to be different.

They dared to be different. They had the courage to say no. Mind you, they said it very courteously, as we'll see.

They had the courage to say no. Do you know that the word holy in the Bible means different? That's what it means. It means set apart.

It means separate. And what does set apart and separate mean? It means different. And what it really boils down to, if a child of God is going to be holy, he's going to be different from the people around him.

Now, we hate that a lot of times, don't we? We don't want to be different. We want to be like the rest of people. We want to merge into the environment, don't we? I'll tell you, you'll never make history for God if you merge into the environment.

If you succumb to the chill of your environment, you'll never make history for God. And these fellows realized that. And they said, no, we have the word of God, and we're going to be true to God, though a thousand voices from the world may call to us.

Praise God for people today who have the courage to say no. I maintain that if a man's going to live a holy life, he's got to have to say no 10,000 times a week. What do you think of that? That's what it is.

We're doing it unconsciously half the time. All of these solicitations to evil and to compromise are coming up all the time. And a well-instructed Christian is saying, no, no, no, no, 10,000 times a week.

It's pretty negative. Well, if it has to be that way to be holy, then I want it to be that way. They dare to be different.

Next lesson I see here. Instead of rebelling, they first courteously appealed to authority. Verse 8b, it says, therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

If he ate of that food coming out of the kitchen, he'd be eating non-kosher food. And he'd be eating food probably that had been offered to idols. And he would defile himself.

And that would cut him off from fellowship with God, that ceremonial defilement. And he courteously asked the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. Well, I like this.

And I think there's a lesson in this for me. First of all, he observed the chain of command. That's good.

He observed the chain of command. He didn't try to short-circuit the prince of the eunuchs and go to somebody else. No, no.

He didn't say, look, I'm not going to do it. Period. You can go away with your shrimp and lobster and clams.

He didn't say that. He said, look, may I make the courteous request? Let's work out a substitute plan. And you know, this is one of the great lessons that we have to learn in the Christian life.

There's a right and a wrong way of doing everything. And half of our troubles come because we do it the wrong way. A lot of young people in an assembly.

Let me just give this as an illustration. A lot of young people in the assembly. And they're full of fire.

You know, they're born running and they want to see things happen for God. And my heart's with them. And maybe things aren't moving that well in the assembly.

And they go to the elders and they kind of run off at the mouth. And they say, what you should be doing in this assembly is quote, quote, quote, quote. You know, the wrong way to do it.

Never get anywhere that way. Until you can start using the personal pronoun we in the assembly, you're not a part of it. Isn't that right? You point the finger and say, you, you, you.

You just turn people off. You say, could I make a suggestion? I think we ought to be doing something like this. And I'd like to get in there and do it.

That makes a big difference, doesn't it? When you say, I'm willing to get in there and do it. I want to be a part of this. And I'll give myself a right and wrong way of doing everything.

And part of spiritual maturity is learning this, learning the gracious approach and learning. Well, they knew it here. And they courteously appealed to the prince of the eunuchs.

They observed the chain of command. We have to do this with our government, don't we? We should be subject to the powers that be. They are ordained of God.

And we do, we obey the governmental authorities up to the point where they tell us that we have to compromise our loyalty to the Savior. And then we say, we cannot do that. We refuse to do that.

We will suffer the consequences uncomplainingly. And we will not rebel against the government or join in any insurrection against it. That's what the Christians do in the communist lands today and other lands of

the world.

They have to refuse under certain circumstances. They just take the consequences and leave it with the Lord. Verse 9. Now God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.

I tell you, the Word of God is a wonderful book. What does it mean? It means, when a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him. Here's Daniel.

The next thing you know, he's in with the prince of the eunuchs. The end with him. Humanly speaking, they're enemies of Babylonians in the Israelites.

You know? Humanly speaking. I'll never forget when dear Sam Maddox and Lloyd Opal came back from Laos. And they told us about that terrible march from Laos to Hanoi where they were imprisoned in the Hanoi Hilton.

And Sam told me of one place where they stopped. And a Laotian came and showed kindness to those dear fellows. He treated them as if they were his own sons.

When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him. Then I noticed down in verse 12 that Daniel had faith that God would vindicate him. Prove thy servants.

Verse 12. I beseech thee ten days and let them give us hope to eat and water to drink. And he had confidence that if they would allow this plan to take effect, God in heaven would move in their behalf.

I'll tell you that's a wonderful thing. I tell you again, I admire the poise of Daniel and his fellows. They didn't get rattled.

They didn't get frenzied. They didn't lose their cool. They were the ones that were poised.

And this has impressed me lately as I've been in the book of Daniel. That Daniel on his knees had more power than Nebuchadnezzar, the greatest ruler in the world at that time. Daniel was the one who was changing the course of history.

And the fellows that were with him, what a lesson that is to us. We don't have to feel cowardly. And I think it's a wonderful word for those going into foreign lands with the gospel.

Some missionaries say, boy, it's a wonderful thing to know that the stars in their courses fight for the man who fights with God. I don't mean fights against God, but the stars in their courses fight for the man who fights on the side of God. If the Lord be for us, who can be successfully against us? He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? And Daniel did have faith that the Lord would vindicate him.

But, verse 13, he was willing to face the consequences of his stand. His mind was made up anyway, and whether they agreed to the plan or whatever they wanted to do, he was going to go on. For God and nothing was going to stop him.

Verse 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 service. Well, the thing was eminently fair. It was eminently reasonable.

It would cut down the food bill in the royal kitchen. All they were going to eat was the vegetable blue plate special, and they were going to drink water. That was it.

That was it. But God was on the throne looking out over it all. The next Kodachrome slide that comes on the screen, verse 18, you have Daniel and his friends ushered before the king.

How about that? We don't have any ruler in the world today comparable to Nebuchadnezzar. He was one of the great world leaders as far as power is concerned. And here are those little nobodies standing before the king.

What's the lesson there? Seest thou a man diligent in his business, he shall stand before kings. He shall not stand before mean men. Did you know that principle holds today? You show me a man who's devoted to the Lord Jesus, a woman who has turned over her life to the Lord Jesus, diligent in the service of the Lord, that person's going to stand before nobility.

He won't stand before mean men. And God is working it all out. So beautifully here.

And then we move down and we find in verses 19 and 20, that the king communed with them. And among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Therefore, should they before the king.

Listen, men of Christian character gain respect. There's an awful lot of people in this country who cordially hated Charles Coulson. What did he have the reputation of? That he'd even walk over his own grandmother, something like that.

No, before he was saved. And I've been in touch with people and they didn't have a good word to say for him. But Charles Coulson came and bowed before the Lord and confessed his sin and received Jesus Christ as Savior.

And in his book, he tells about how in his unconverted days, with all the contacts he had. And he had contacts. I mean, when you read that book, you're right in the oval room of the White House.

It's the most real situation. And yet he said in all his unconverted days, he couldn't look back and see a single life he had influenced for good. And he got saved and he's in jail.

He's in prison. And he wasn't in a country club prison either. He was in one of the worst, really.

Leading prisoners to the Lord Jesus. But it made it all worthwhile. He saw God working behind the scenes on his behalf.

That's something to think about, isn't it? Here he was a right-hand man to President Nixon. He knew all the names of the people, you know, that he was in contact with. People you read about every day in the newspaper.

He couldn't think of a single life he had influenced for good in all his unconverted days. Isn't that tragic? How about everybody changed after he got saved? And people are being blessed through his testimony every day of the year now. God's blessing comes through obedience, doesn't it? We sang that hymn today.

Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey. And we spoke about that yesterday, that what really counts with God is your obedience quotient. You might not have as much gray matter up there as other people, but it doesn't matter.

You have a heart to obey Christ. Well, these people had a heart to obey the Lord, and that's what counted with them. And because of their obedient loyalty, God was glorified.

I'll tell you, if they had compromised, if they had rationalized, if they had thought of 60 theological reasons why they should go along with the herd, God would have got no glory out of it. God would have got no glory out of it. But as a result of this, God is glorified in the palace of the world's tyrant.

It says, verse 19, In all matters of wisdom and understanding that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were... If you live for God, the world will never love you, but it'll never forget you either. The world will never love you. It'll respect you, though.

Respect you. I remember during the war years, I went out one night to eat with a pilot from our squadron, and he used to scoff at me. I used to go down to Western Book and Tract Company to buy Christian literature, and he called it Western Bilge and Trash Company.

And he had a worldly name for everything that I was engaged in or in to do with. So I went into the restaurant with him this night. Ungodly fellow, really.

And I was seeking to win him to Christ. And we had our supper, and then it came time, the waitress said, Will you have a dessert? And he said, Yes, I'll have a daiquiri. Well, I suppose I thought a daiquiri was apple pie and ice cream or something, so I said, Make it two.

Really, I'm not exaggerating. I'm telling you the truth. He turned to me, and he turned to the waitress, and he said, No, make it one, he said.

He turned to me and said, You order something else. I didn't know what it was. It was some kind of liqueur.

It was crushed ice with a liqueur, mint or something poured. I don't know what that was. Anyway, it wasn't apple pie and ice cream.

But my point is that he had respect for me and for my position, and he knew that I had lived a separated life, and I didn't know the score in those things. He said to the waitress, No, make it one, he said. Then he turned to me, You order something else.

I notice in this chapter that our responsibility is to obey God and leave the consequences to Him. Somebody came to Spurgeon once and said, Spurgeon was, you know, pressing the claims of Christ on this man, and then said, Well, I have to live, don't I? And Spurgeon said, I don't grant that. We have to please God and obey Him.

That's right. We don't have to live. Who said we had to live? We have to please God, and we have to obey Him.

And another precious lesson I learned in this chapter, and in all of these chapters, these early chapters of Daniel, and it's really beautiful in that it says, Men can do nothing against the truth. Men try to hinder and obstruct the work of God, and all they succeed in doing is furthering it. You remember how they heated the

furnace of fire seven times hotter than usual? I can't imagine what that temperature was.

Some of you scientists would know. I can't imagine. Seven times hotter.

You know, it's a great thing they did that. You know why? Because all the greater miracle for God. All the greater glory for God.

It was just as easy for him to deliver from that furnace as it was from a cool one. I like a story that Barnhouse used to tell years ago. It was this man that had his wealthiest estate.

You know, he had fruit trees and other trees from all over. It was grand and glorious. They think it's the Grand Canyon, and they like to go in.

He had this tremendous estate, and he had an enemy who wanted to do him harm. And the enemy decided that one night he would go in, and he would chop down, during the night, one of the most beautiful trees on the estate. So he did.

He went in with his axe, and he went in with his staff, and all his accoutrements, and he worked through the night getting this tree down, alone. And the morning light was breaking. The tree was ready to fall.

And when the tree fell, one of the big branches hit him and knocked him to the ground with a mortal wound. Didn't kill him right away. He was still conscious.

And as he lay there under the tree, dying, he heard a horse, horses coming, two horses coming. You know what this was? This was the owner of the estate coming with his manager, and they had blueprints in their hands. And they were discussing what was going to happen.

They were going to have to remove a tree for a construction project, but that was the tree they were going to have to get down. And he had worked all night, in spite and in hatred, doing what was going to be done anyway. You know, you have that same thing in the New Testament.

You have the man born blind. You have the man born blind. And the Lord Jesus comes along, and he gives sight to that man's blinded eyes.

And what did the Jews do? They kicked him out of the synagogue. Listen, dear friends, they only did what Jesus would have done anyway. It says in the very next chapter that he gets his sheep and he leads them out.

He would have led him out of the synagogue anyway. They saved him the trouble. You can do nothing against the truth of God.

A man in all his rage and in all his insanity only succeeds in furthering the cause of God on earth. How does it apply to us? How does this chapter apply to us? Oh, the world with all its allurements. The world with all its worldly pleasures beckoning to us.

Come on, join the crowd. Where are the men and women who will stand for God? Men with spine and conscience and say, We're going to go on for God. We're going to live our lives for God.

We're going to live in separation from the world and all its rotten ways. How does it apply to us today? Standing for the truth of God in the school system. You know what it's like in public schools today.

I'm not going to tell you from the platform some of the things that have taken place in public schools out in California. All I'll tell you is a brother in one of our assemblies who works in a high school spoke out against it and he's not in that school anymore. When I was younger, in an assembly back in Massachusetts, there was a girl in our assembly.

Mrs. McKenzie might remember her, I don't know. Her name was Edith Vail. And she went to school and the teacher wanted the students to recite the poem *Invictus*.

Invictus is supposed to be a classic of English literature. The word *Invictus* is the Latin for unconquered, unconquered. And it was written by William Hendricks.

And the teacher wanted all her students to memorize this poem and recite it. And it's an infidel, atheistical poem. That's what it is.

And Edith Vail said, sorry. She said, I can't do that. Oh boy, it really lifted the lid off her.

It was in the local papers, the Melrose papers. They thought, you know, was it the time when the JW's, the Jehovah's Witnesses are causing all the fuss. They wouldn't salute the flag and all this.

And here was a girl that wouldn't recite *Invictus* by William Hendricks, one of the classics of English literature. And just so you'll know why she wouldn't recite it, I'll tell you what it says. It says, out of the night that covers me, black as the pit from pole to pole, I thank whatever gods may be for my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance, I have not winced nor cried aloud. Under the bludgeonings of chance, my head is bloody but unbowed. Beyond this place of wrath and tears looms but the horror of the shade.

And yet the menace of the years finds and shall find me unafraid. It matters not how straight the gate, how charged with punishment the scroll. I am the master of my fate.

I am the captain of my soul. And Edith Vail said, I can't recite that poem. I can't stand up in the school and recite that poem.

And as I said, it was a terrible question. It was in the daily papers and we felt so self-conscious, you know, our poor little assembly making the headlines of the paper. Somebody came to Edith Vail and they said, Edith, they said, you know, there's a Christian version of that poem.

Why don't you go and ask the teacher if you can recite the Christian version? And she went just like Daniel went to the chief of the unit. And she made her request. And the request was granted.

And Edith Vail got up in the assembly and she recited this. Out of the light that dazzled me, bright as the sun from pole to pole, I thank the God I know to be for Christ, the conqueror of my soul. Since his the sway of circumstance, I would not wince nor cry aloud.

Under that rule which men called chance, my head with joy is humbly bowed. Beyond this place of sin and tears, that life with him and his the aid that spite the menace of the years teach me and shall keep me unafraid. I have no fear, though, straight the gate.

He cleared from punishment the scroll. Christ is the master of my faith. Christ is the captain of my soul.

Now, mind you, she was just a schoolgirl. Didn't she have courage to stand up before a hostile world and recite that poem? And God was greatly glorified. And the first chapter of Daniel was repeated.

Do we have that kind of courage today at the schools? When you hear the name of the Lord Jesus being run down, you have courage to speak out for him. How about it in business, men and women? Terrible temptation to compromise in business today. One of our last year's interns was working in a silk screen process just a couple of months ago, and his boss was supposedly a Christian, and one day his boss said to him, Jim, he said, praise God, in answer to prayer, he said, we got a wonderful order.

It was a T-shirt, you know, with some silk screen printing on it. And Jim went in on Monday morning, and here was something, this was the job that they were going to print, and it was in Spanish. And Jim said to him, what does it say? And this fellow, who was supposed to be a Christian, the owner said, tell them what it was.

You know what it was? It was pornography, that's what it was. And Jim Matthews said, I'm sorry, but he said, I can't work for you there. Jim's out of work today, but I want to tell you, watch that guy, God's going to honor him.

God has a work for him to do. All kinds of temptation, just for the dollar, you know, to compromise in business today. Thank God for men and women, as I said before, who'd rather go to heaven with a good conscience than live on earth with a bad conscience.

Thank God for men who take stand with conviction for Christ in the religious world today. I don't think most of us realize the risk there is. There's a book that has just come out, *The Battle for the Bible*, by Harold Lindzell.

And he tells some of the most shocking things of men, like in evangelical seminaries, one in particular, and they sign their name to a statement of faith, and they don't believe it. And one of the leading teachers in that evangelical seminary, he says, Jesus said that the mustard seed was the smallest of all seeds, but we know that the mustard seed is not the smallest of all seeds, therefore the Bible contains error. You can read all about it in *The Battle for the Bible* by Harold Lindzell.

Shocking book, but I thank God for men and women of spine today who speak out. Harold Lindzell happens to be one of them, and he's taking terrible abuse for it today. God is looking for men and women with convictions regarding the truth of the New Testament assembly.

Do we have that? Do you know why you're in the assembly? Do you know what it stands for? Do you know the difference between gathering to a man and gathering to the Lord Jesus? You know, I hate to say this, but many of the people in the assembly today have so little conviction that they think nothing of going off to a family gathering on Groundhog Day and miss the breaking of bread. Really, that's about where it is. That's about where it is.

God is looking for people today who have convictions, who believe what they believe. Convictions in social life, too. Convictions regarding the unequal yoke.

They'd rather go through life single than disobey God in this most important matter. May the Lord give us the courage of Daniel and his three friends to have convictions and stand by those convictions and be true to the Lord Jesus, though a thousand voices from the world may call.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/7/SID7736.mp3>
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