

Daniel 1:1-21

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[0:00] If you will, please take out your copy of God's Word and turn with me to the book of Daniel. It's right after Ezekiel. You'll likely find Ezekiel before you find Daniel.

! Also, no shame in turning to your table of contents. While you're getting there, I just want to say two quick things.

First, there's still a couple of these scripture journals out there in the hallway. I think there's three left out there. So if you want one, it's just a useful little tool to take notes in. But also, if they're gone, you can grab these. Grab them on Amazon.

If you don't have an Amazon Prime account, I do. Come talk to me. I'll be happy to get one for you and shipped free. Crossway also has put out these really fantastic illuminated versions of these. They're much more decorative. I think they're like \$2 more. You get gilding as a result of that. Kind of nice, but handy tools for that end. Also, too, I wanted to point out a typo to you on the bulletin.

[0:59] Predominantly to say that Andy Truitt worked really hard on putting these together for us every week. And if there's ever a typo, it's not his fault. It's mine. So this morning it says we're going to look at Daniel 1, verse 1-25.

It only goes through verse 21. The first chapter of Daniel is 1-21. I'm not going to unlock the four verses that are not in your Bible at all this morning.

So we'll be looking at Daniel 1, verses 1-21. And that was my fault, not Andy's. He does a very good job, and I'm thankful for him. So Daniel 1, verses 1-21.

Let me remind you, last week we looked at an overview of the book of Daniel, kind of quick summary of the text, and talked about the three major themes of the book. And so let me remind you of those, and we're going to look at a particular one this morning.

So the three major themes first are the rise and fall of man. So man has glory that comes and goes, successes that come and go.

[2:06] Second theme, the immovable sovereignty of God. Right? God's power, God's glory never waxes and wanes. It is always, it is steady and immovable.

And thirdly, the resilient faith of Daniel and his friends in a hostile culture. And that's the one we'll look at particularly today.

But before we do, we're going to read the entirety of chapter 1 together. And before I read it, let me remind you, beloved, this is God's word to us. It was written for his glory and our good.

And so we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands.

So Daniel chapter 1, beginning in verse 1. Now, Shinar is another word for Babylon.

It's a region. Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding, learning, and competent to stand in the king's palace and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.

[3:41] Again, another word for the Babylonians. We won't get into all the nuance of that, but when you see Chaldeans, think Babylonians. Verse 5. The king assigned them a daily portion of the food that the king ate and of the wine that he drank.

They were to be educated for three years, and at the end of that time, they were to stand before the king. Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah.

And the chief of the eunuchs gave them names. Daniel he called Belshazzar. Hananiah he called Shadrach. Mishael he called Meshach. And Azariah he called Abednego.

But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food or with the wine that he drank. Therefore, he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself.

And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs. And the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, I fear my lord, the king, who assigned your food and your drink.

[4:44] For why should he see that you were in worse condition than the youths who are of your own age? So you would endanger my head with the king. Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, test your servants for ten days.

Let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's food be observed by you and deal with your servants according to what you see.

So he listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days. At the end of ten days, it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's food.

So the steward took away their food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables. As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom. And Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

At the end of the time, when the king had commanded they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. And the king spoke with them, and among all of them none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

[5:52] Therefore they stood before the king. And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom.

And Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus. So, as I said previously, chapter one really draws our attention to that third of those three major themes, right?

The theme of the resilient faith of Daniel and his friends in a hostile culture. So we're going to consider that a bit further with the following outline. We won't be able to wring everything out of this text this morning.

There's much more that I would encourage you to study in chapter one. But we'll look particularly at this theme in this way. Number one, the pressure to compromise resilient faith.

Number two, the preparation for resilient faith. And number three, the power of resilient faith. So, pressure to compromise, preparation, power.

[6:52] Number one, the pressure to compromise resilient faith. This would have been an enormous pressure for these young men, right? A pressure that none of us have likely felt.

None that I know of in our congregation have felt this kind of pressure. These young men had seen their home city destroyed. The Babylonians had a mighty army.

Nobody stood in their face in these days. They had been transported roughly 1,700 miles to a foreign land with an entirely different language, culture, food.

This is a strange place for them to be. And they were hand-selected to be trained in the ways of Babylon to serve in the king's court.

They were slaves. There's much benefit being given to them, but they were not their own any longer. These young men were likely between 13 and 16 years old at the time of their capture.

[7:58] We can know this because Daniel was still alive 70 years later when the captivity ended. What pressure they must have experienced to conform to this new culture, right?

Young, young men, right? To have their faith compromised under all this pressure. And they were pressured to change in a number of ways.

First, they were pressured to change in their thinking. Last half of chapter 1, verse 4. It says they were to be taught the literature and the language of the Chaldeans.

So the literature of the day would have had in it the culture, right? The way of thinking of the Babylonians. They would have been instructed about the Babylonian worldview. Their view of man. Their view of God or gods. Their view of sin. Their view of redemption. All opposed to what these young men had been taught.

[9:03] It was in direct opposition to this. They were being conditioned to no longer be Jews, but to be Babylonians. In the same way, we live in a culture that is trying to change the way that we think.

And this happens predominantly through our means of entertainment. It's coming at us all the time. We are always being disciplined.

At all times, we are being taught a way in which we should think. A way in which we should feel. A way in which we should go. And we must be very careful as God's people not to normalize what a fallen world would have us normalize.

We must labor to have, firstly, and to hold a biblical worldview. These young men come to this place with a biblical worldview.

They have it. And the challenge before them, as they're being trained in the ways of Babylon, is to hold it. They're also being pressured to change their worship.

[10:12] Consider with me the changing of their names found in verse 7, which was a very common way of declaring ownership over a person.

And therefore, that their destiny has changed. They're no longer moving in the direction they were once moving as men of the royal house of Jerusalem. They now belong to King Nebuchadnezzar. Sometimes this is for the positive, but most often it was for the negative. Imagine yourself being taken captive, having been given a name. And if people say to you, this is no longer your name. We don't want you to be tied to and remember the place from which you came. We are now going to define who you are. So, the names that they're meaning in Hebrew, Daniel, means God is my judge.

And he was given instead the name Belteshazzar, which means Bel, which was a god of Babylon, will protect me. Hananiah, his name means God has been gracious.

[11:21] And he's given instead the name Shadrach, which means inspired of Aku, A-K-U, I'm guessing, another Babylonian god.

Mishael, whose name means who is what God is. He was instead given the name Mishak, which means belonging to Aku.

Azariah, his name in Hebrew means God has helped. And he's instead given the name Abednego, which means servant of Nego.

So, they're changing their names and they're stripping away, they're taking out the name of their god from all of their names. It's removed from them so that they would forget from where and from whom they came.

The Babylonians wanted these young men to forsake the worship of Yahweh and exchange it for the worship of their pagan gods. Now, again, no one has forced a change of name upon any of us.

[12:29] Sometimes it's hard for us to find ourselves in texts like this. And it can feel like a stretch sometimes to do so. But we are constantly being told to forget from where and from whom we come.

Beloved, if you are in Christ this morning, you are gods and we are citizens of his kingdom. We are strangers and aliens in the place in which we live.

And the world all the time wants us to think that we are self-determining, self-created. But we have a creator, God. He has called us to himself.

We must be reminded of this. We must hold this. We must not let the pressure of the culture cause us to forget. All other allegiances, and not all bad allegiances.

There are other good allegiances in this world. But all other allegiances bow to this allegiance, that we are gods and that we are citizens of his kingdom. They were also being pressured to change their way of living.

[13:38] So we read in verse 5 that the king assigned them a daily portion of the food that the king ate and of the wine that he drank. The best, the best food was offered to these young men.

It would seem that all of the other men accepted this. They were very glad to eat well in the king's court. Verse 5 also tells us they were to be educated for three years.

And at the end of that time, they were to stand before the king. They were to show their worthiness before the king. But verse 8 tells us that Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food or with the wine that he drank.

Therefore, he asked the chief of units to allow him not to defile himself. Note that there is suddenly, for Daniel and his friends, a line that must not be crossed.

They have likely been educated. They're going to class. They're not skipping class. They're showing up and they're being educated in the language and in the literature. But there's suddenly now a line. This far, but no further.

[14:46] But why? Daniel was not a vegetarian or a teetotaler. That is not the application of this text. Everybody can breathe a deep sigh of relief. I'm not going to tell you to be a vegetarian this morning.

In Daniel chapter 10, verses 2 and 3, Daniel records that he restrained from meat and wine for a period of mourning, which of course suggests that he regularly ate meat and drank wine.

That's not what's going on here. This was the line for Daniel and his friends for two reasons. Some of the meat was unclean.

They're not Hebrew people. It's another place. So things like goat. God's law had forbidden them from eating for the sake of their health. The Hebrew word for defilement is used most often in the Old Testament in reference to religious defilement.

So we can see from that word that that's what Daniel is talking about here. There was something outside of the food laws of Israel that they were being given to eat. Secondly, another law forbid this, all of the meat eaten at the king's table would have first been offered to the pagan gods.

[16:00] A. Leo Oppenheim in his work, *Ancient Mesopotamia, Portrait of a Dead Civilization*, tells us that this was the normative practice. The king ate the leftovers of the gods.

The king ate the leftovers of the gods' meal. And when I read that this week, I actually found that quite funny. The food was laid before the gods. And then whatever was left over was taken to the king, which would have been all the food.

These false gods that have no mouths and cannot eat. But nonetheless, this is the order in which the food was prepared and presented.

So all of this food would have been offered in that way. And Daniel and his friends are aware of this, right? They did not want to sin against Yahweh.

They were not willing to defile themselves. So Daniel resolved and his friends followed suit. They drew a clear line in the sand.

[16:58] Now, we no longer have food laws to abide by, but we also will feel pressure to participate in the sin of our culture. Because it's easier to do so.

Because we want to avoid discomfort. Because we don't want to be seen as weird or as an outsider. We have such a light burden when it comes to standing for the truth and obeying God.

Daniel and his friends could have very likely been put to death for the request that was made.

Daniel records that God showed him favor. That the chief eunuch didn't do this thing.

Didn't punish them in this way. But rather showed him favor. I do at this point just want to note that lately, over this past year, I've heard a number of people, a number of pastors that I respect, use the story of Daniel to talk about rebellion, revolt.

And this is not the picture that I see in this text at all. He certainly took a stand. There's times to do that. There's times to resolve not to do something. But verse 8 says he resolved that he would not defile himself.

[18:12] I don't think that he was going to go back on that at all. I think the language is strong. It means to be strong. Daniel's writing this for us to say there's no way, no chance that I would have eaten of this food.

But what he does next is ask the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself. It goes about it in a peaceable way.

And praise be to God, God grants him favor in that. And what may have happened if God hadn't? If the eunuch had said, no, you must eat it? Well, I think they would have refused and they would have been put to death for taking that stand.

And it would have been the right thing to do. But he's not starting a revolution when he does this. Beloved, we must stand firm when pressured to compromise our resilient faith.

We also must recognize that while we do not anticipate the level of pressure that Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah experience, I don't think, although maybe we'll be conquered by another people and taken away, we will experience pressure of some kind, though, to compromise.

[19:18] We have already experienced pressure to compromise our holiness. And we will not remain faithful in that day without preparation.

So secondly, let's look at the preparation for resilient faith. These young men, remember, these teenagers did not just suddenly become faithful.

They had faith worked into them. First note, the preparation of the word of God by the people of God.

And we have to read between the lines a little bit at this point. But we must ask the question, how is it that they came knowing God's law? They weren't going to defile themselves. They knew this God, that they should not betray his word.

But how? How did they know this? So if Daniel is, let's say, 16 at the time of this event, then that means he would have been born in 622 B.C.

[20:23] And we don't know this for sure. We can't for sure. But if we're just doing some math and a little bit of conjecture, we know from Daniel 1, verse 1, that it was in the year 606 B.C.

Because Daniel records for us, in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah. We know when that came to pass. So 606. So if we do a little bit of math, we apply, let's just presume for a second that Daniel's 16.

Then the year that Daniel was born, something very significant happened. Or around the year that he was born. The Jewish king, Josiah, young king, 18 at the time, opened the doors of the temple, which had been sealed by his grandfather, Manasseh.

And the priests went in, and they rediscovered the word of God, and they began teaching the people from it. This began a great, although short-lived, revival in Israel.

And Daniel and his friends would have been instructed in the word. This is how the word came to them. It's how they know what faithfulness is going to look like in Babylon.

[21:41] We, too, must know the truth if we're going to have resilient faith. We must be prepared in this. And we have God's word. We don't have to wait for somebody to unseal the temple and rediscover it.

We have it. Each and every one of us has it. I bet all of us right now can access multiple sources of it with devices. There's a stack of them in the back of the room. We have abundant access to God's word and wonderful help in understanding God's word.

We have no excuse not to be prepared to stand faithfully in days of trial. The concern, I think, is that as we're being disciplined by our culture, we're looking for wisdom in places that wisdom really ought not be found.

Or lesser places that wisdom ought not be found. A contemporary pastor named Brett McCracken has recently written a book called *The Wisdom Pyramid*, which I think is really fantastic.

And he uses the idea of the food pyramids. Everybody get the food pyramid pictured in their minds, which is actually a bad thing. You probably shouldn't eat the way the food pyramid tells you to eat, by the way. Like, grains shouldn't be the base of your food pyramid.

[22:54] It should be vegetables. But not the point. I digress. But if you can picture that, right? The USDA has told us this is how you ought to be prioritizing your eating.

He takes that idea and he puts at the very top, that little tiny triangle at the very, very top, internet and social media. A very tiny amount of wisdom should be coming from that source.

And I fear for us, I feel for God's people, that way too much wisdom is looked for in that place. And very, very little even can be found there.

He puts just below that, so in a broadening sense, beauty. And by that he means art, so music, good writing, poetry, things of that nature.

He puts below that books. Not all books are wise books, but there's much wisdom to be found in books. He puts below that, again, it's getting wider and wider, nature.

[23:59] What God has revealed to us in his creation about himself. He places below that, the church. God's people coming together and opening the word together to rightly understand and apply that word.

And then, if you're tracking with me right now, you'll know at the bottom he puts the Bible itself. God's word as the primary, as the weighty source for where our wisdom comes.

We will have to be prepared for the day of trial. And we won't see the day of trial coming. I highly doubt that Daniel and his friends said, We've got to get ready, because the Babylonians are definitely coming.

They just were about the work of being faithful. I also had the preparation of parents. Very briefly, we don't know much of anything about these young men's parents.

They were somehow in the royal house of Israel. But we do know that they were God-fearing. And we can know this because of their names. They were all named these names.

[25:12] That meant, God is my judge. God has been gracious. Who is what God is? That's my favorite one, Mishael. And God has helped.

These were people, young men who grew up in God-fearing homes. And then also, the preparation of God.

Now, all of those are means. The word of God, the people of God, these parents, these God-fearing parents. They're all divine gifts. They're all means of God's gracious work in the lives of these men and in ours.

But Daniel makes a couple of careful observations in this text about God's participation in their circumstances that I would be negligent not to draw your attention to. So, chapter 1, verses 9 and 10.

Daniel records, And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs. And the chief of the eunuchs said, I fear my lord, the king who assigned your food and your drink.

[26:12] Why should you see it? We are in worship that youths who are your own age. So you would endanger my head with the king. And then, verse 17. As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom.

And Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. Right? Apart from God's intervening work in our lives, we cannot have resilient faith.

Right? We need grace. Right? We need God's divine intervention. We will never be able to stand against the onslaught of this world apart from the grace and the mercy of God.

We are saved or made his people by grace alone, through faith alone, in the person and work of Jesus Christ alone. Jesus stated in John chapter 15, verse 4 and following, Abide in me and I in you.

Right? If we believed in Christ, we are both in him and he is in us. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.

[27:22] I am the vine. You are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit. For apart from me, you can do nothing.

So, Daniel and his friends, you would then say, but wait, Jesus hadn't come and lived and died and resurrected in their day. Their faith was rooted in the future promise that he would.

Thirdly, let's look at the result or the power of resilient faith. First, God blessed Daniel through Daniel's resilient faith.

As a result of Daniel's faith, God blessed him. He blessed him in body. Verse 15, at the end of 10 days, it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's food.

I think they mean fatter in flesh in a good way. I think they had stayed sleek. They weren't shrinking away. I think is what is meant by this.

[28:24] So, he had blessed their health as they were obedient to what he had asked them to do. I also blessed Daniel in spirit. Verse 17 says that Daniel has understanding in all visions and dreams.

He was in sync with God and God was revealing to him what these things meant. And he also blessed Daniel in mind. Verse 20 says, and in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and

enchanters that were in all his kingdom.

So, God blessed Daniel. Now, he didn't remove him from the slavery. Don't forget, even as he's being promoted, he's still a slave. He's still being directed by a king. But he profited him in that position because of his faith.

Second, God blessed kings through Daniel's resilient faith. The very last verse, verse 21, not verse 25, says, And Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus, who was the conquering Persian king.

So, Daniel was in this place at the very end, the end of the Babylonian empire. So, he, by God's direction, was able to give direction to Nebuchadnezzar II, who we find in this text here.

[29:52] Nebuchadnezzar III, that we read about in chapter 4. It's something I learned this week. I thought it was the same, Nebuchadnezzar. It's his son, Belshazzar and Darius the Mede.

All of these kings' lives are spoken into because of Daniel's resilient faith. Resilient faith is powerful. It speaks.

It gives us platform for truth. Not always at the pace we'd like for it to. Not always in the ways that we would like for it to. I see many of you struggle in your families, just wanting to speak the truth, just wanting to help people understand.

And so many of us need to hear, be patient. Stick in. Live a life that displays how very glorious your God is.

Third, God blessed Daniel's three friends through Daniel's resilient faith. Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah followed Daniel's lead and did not defile themselves with the king's food.

[30:59] As a result, they were also given much insight, wisdom, and power. Daniel doesn't record that they also could interpret dreams, but they had a lot of wisdom.

We're going to read in chapter 3. They've been promoted, and Daniel's nowhere to be found in chapter 3. And they do not compromise their faith when asked to bow the knee to a pagan idol. They even go and stand before Nebuchadnezzar, and they're thrown into a fiery furnace. But they follow Daniel's example. Now, a danger that we can always come across as we look at a text like this, like we look at this account of Daniel.

Never in the book of Daniel do we see great failures of Daniel, although many of the Bible characters we do. We're very clearly told not a hero, right? Not one to emulate in all ways.

We don't see that with Daniel, and the temptation can be to say Daniel is the grand example for us to follow. He is an example, right? This is instructive to us.

[32:01] How did Daniel respond in faith? But it ought to make us think of a greater example. It ought to make us think of the perfect example. Daniel is a type.

Jesus Christ is the anti-type, right? Jesus came, and he had resilient faith perfectly, right? Surely Daniel failed at some point, right?

He doesn't record it. He wasn't inspired to record it for us. But surely he did. He was not without fault. But Jesus Christ was without fault, right? He perfectly kept the law. He fulfilled the righteousness that God requires of us.

He had a culture that was directly opposed to him, right? Satan himself took him into the desert and tempted him to compromise that faith.

And yet he stood. Perfectly stood. And he received the greatest opposition to his faith all the way to the point of the cross.

[33:03] Jesus took on himself our punishment, all of our failing, all of our unfaithfulness. He took that punishment, the punishment that was due us.

He raised three days later. He's seated at the right hand of the Father right now. He's working this faith in his people. And now God uses the resilient faith, this divine faith that's given to his people, to accomplish his purpose in the world.

Namely, his praise amongst all peoples, right? He's making himself known through the resilient faith of his people.

May we be a people who stand faithfully when the world presses us to compromise. May we be a people who will not be moved because our God has gone before us and his promises are sure.

Let's pray together. Amen.