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DANIEL: Living With Conviction
Daniel 1:8-21¹

INTRODUCTION:

Good morning, Trinity! For those of you that are guests, we want to say a special welcome to you. My name is Chris Wigley, and I serve as one of the Pastors here at Trinity. And whether you are in the room or you are joining us online, we are excited to have you today. And on behalf of our church family, and our staff team, we say welcome you today.

I would love the opportunity to connect with you. You can simply text the keyword, "TBCMP," that stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mt. Pleasant, to the number 94-000. You will then be prompted to click on a link that will provide us with basic contact information to follow up with you. And here's my promise to you... we will not bombard your inbox. Again, we would love the opportunity to connect with you and to pray for you.

Today we are continuing a teaching series where we are working our way through the book of Daniel. Last week we introduced the book to you by looking at the juxtapositions between culture and the life God has called us to live. And it is our desire to approach this study, not as a negative critique of culture, but as an opportunity to see how Daniel influenced the ungodly culture in which he found himself.

So, I want to invite you to turn with me in your copy of God's Word to the book of Daniel as we continue chapter 1 this morning. If you're new to bible study, and it's okay if you are because we are all new to bible study at some point, Daniel is located in the Old Testament between the books of Ezekiel and Hosea. If you do not have a bible with you this morning, there is a bible located on the seat rack in front of you. If you need a bible, feel free to take that as a gift to you today. For the vast majority of those bibles, Daniel is located on page 620.

We are going to work our way through verses 8 through 21. The title of this morning's message is, "Living with Conviction."

OPENING ILLUSTRATION: Thermometer versus Thermostat

I am sure you have all heard the illustration comparing a thermometer to a thermostat. The thermometer reads the temperature of the room whereas the

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thermostat sets the temperature of the room. One is a reflection of the room whereas the other changes the room. The thermometer reacts to the environment and the thermostat changes the environment.

What we are going to see this morning as we conclude chapter 1 is how Daniel was a thermostat. He worked to set the temperature of the room. And what drove Daniel to play that role is that he was a man of conviction.

We live in a culture, not that different from Daniel. We, as bible-believing Christ-followers, are constantly asked to temper our beliefs to the ideologies of our culture. We are finding that the culture, like in Daniel's day, is increasingly hostile toward biblical faith. Daniel had to learn how to navigate persecution, prideful politicians, and petrifying predictions all while maintaining their commitment to The Lord God.ⁱⁱ

In our passage of study this morning, we are going to see how Daniel and company had to decide whether they would be thermometers or thermostats. Whether they would be transformed by the culture of transformers of the culture. And we will see how they became transformers of culture and they did so by living with conviction.

I want to, today, examine 3 aspects to living with conviction. We will see that living with conviction requires the pursuit of holiness, it means trusting God's provision, and living with conviction results in a life of purpose. That is our outline this morning as we work our way through the remainder of Daniel chapter 1.

RECAP:

By way of recap, Daniel is faced with the consequences of what was a generational slide of turning from God and justifying disobedience to God. After 490 years of disobedience, our patient God dealt with His sinful people by delivering them into the hands of the Babylonians. We learned that choices, decisions, have consequences. The best and the smartest were then taken from their homes, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were among those. They were to be enrolled into a course of study that would attempt to reprogram them, and redefine them, to fit their new culture's worldview. But Daniel and his friends determined to be culture influencers. They resolved to live lives of conviction. This is where we pick up our study today.

MESSAGE:

We first see that...

1) Living with conviction requires the pursuit of holiness.

Read with me, Daniel 1, verses 8-13. ⁸ *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.* ⁹ *And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs,* ¹⁰ *and the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who assigned your food and your drink; 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."* ¹¹ *Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,* ¹² *"Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink.* ¹³ *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."*

In these verses we see the strong desire for Daniel to pursue holiness. What does it mean to be holy? Holy is an attribute assigned to God. In multiple passages throughout the bible, we see God described as being, quote, "holy, holy, holy." The repetition of words is for emphasis. Being holy means to be set apart, different, above all others in comparison. That describes the Lord God Almighty.

But also, in multiple places throughout the Scriptures, we are admonished to be holy like our Father in Heaven is holy. While we are not perfect, the instruction to pursue holiness means that we are to be set apart, be distinct. We are to live differently than culture. We are to pursue the life-long task of sanctification, becoming more like Jesus than the culture around us. John the Baptist said it this way in John 3:30, *"He must increase, but I must decrease."*

So, Daniel gives us a map of how we are to pursue holiness in our lives. He resolved that he would not defile himself. In other words, he resolved to be holy. He resolved the stand firmly upon God's Word.

We mentioned this last week, but it bears repeating. God gave clear instructions to the Israelites in the Holy Scriptures, the Mosaic Law, regarding diet. Daniel chose to stand on God's Word above all else. And in Daniel's day,

to eat anything that was unclean meant to defile oneself, the opposite of being set apart, the opposite of holiness.

While we are not tempted in the arena of breaking dietary laws, we do face defilement in other arenas. Proverbs 4:23 says, *"Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life."* The keeping, or the guarding, of our heart is where the battle for holiness is won. And while we don't defile our hearts by the consumption of food, we can defile our hearts with books we read, shows we watch, company we keep, or websites we view. The enemy knows that so long as we compromise in certain areas of our lives that we are less likely to live by way of conviction.

So, let's talk practical for a moment. What are the specific ways we see Daniel navigate this pursuit of holiness? 3 things I see in this passage. First, ...

A) Lean on God's Favor

Verse 9 tells us that God gave Daniel favor and compassion. Here is a truth. **God honors faithfulness.** When Daniel resolved not to defile himself, he was faithful. And we see that Daniel leaned on the truth that God honors faithfulness when he asked the chief permission to not defile himself.

When we are faithful to The Lord, we have to trust The Lord's favor to rest upon us. That doesn't mean everything will be easy. Even with God's favor on Daniel, it still wasn't easy for him. Which brings me to the second way Daniel pursued holiness. He leaned on God's favor which allowed him to ask. Secondly, ...

B) Work around Obstacles

Even though the chief had compassion on Daniel, he still had more fear for king Nebuchadnezzar. The chief feared man when Daniel feared God. Living with conviction means we fear God above man. 2 Timothy 1:7 says, *"for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control."*

Daniel worked around the obstacles presented to him. When the chief said no, that's the obstacle, he made a proposition with the steward. When we pursue holiness, we should expect the enemy to put up obstacles. Obstacle doesn't mean a closed door. Remain faithful to God and work around obstacles.

Lean on God's favor, work around obstacles, and thirdly, ...

C) Trust God's Faithfulness

In verse 12, Daniel asked the Steward to test something. That is pretty daring of Daniel, don't you think? Because what if the test went badly? What if God didn't come through? When Daniel proposed the test, wasn't he taking a huge risk? Not really.

God is always faithful even when we are faithless. Daniel knew to trust the faithfulness of God. You know that you have faith when you pick to be a vegetarian when you can have Texas de Brazil!ⁱⁱⁱ

Did you know that God asks us to put Him to the test? In Malachi 3:10, God says, *"Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby **put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.**"*

Again, God honors faithfulness. Living with conviction requires the pursuit of holiness. Secondly, ...

2) Living with conviction means trusting God's provision.

Read with me verses 14-18. *14 So he listened to them in this matter, and tested them for **ten days**. 15 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. 16 So the steward took away their food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables. 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. 18 At the end of the time, when the king had commanded that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.*

Daniel and company pursued holiness, put God to the test, and God provided. They tested God's provision and not the provision of an earthly king.

Now, something that is interesting of note is the detail given to the length of the dietary test; 10 days. Later on, we will see how Daniel and company were evaluated to be 10 times better than the others. What's the big deal about ten?

One article I read this week point out that 10 represents completeness, law and perfection. We know the Ten Commandments. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach

and Abednego wanted to be undefiled, they wanted to be obedient to God's law while in exile. We know that they succeeded because they are found ten times better than the rest.^{iv} Definitely an interesting thought. But the point is that God provided, and His ways proved to be better. That is always the case, isn't it? God's ways are always better.

ILLUSTRATION: Science of Sabbath Rest

Let me give you an example of this. Take God's admonition to sabbath, to rest. According to a study done in 2014, Professor Jerry Lee from Loma Linda University found a link to taking a day of rest and overall health. He said, quote, "refraining from secular activities on [the] Sabbath was associated with better mental health and better physical health."^v

The point is that God's ways are always better. No one would argue today that even the diet Daniel chose is a much healthier diet than that of the king's table. But that's not the way culture viewed it at the time. God has been consistent over time and His ways have proven to be better in many different arenas. I wonder how we will look back on our day and time, 50 years from now, and see how God's ways were much better? We need to trust that and trust His provision. When we do, we live by conviction.

Look at what else God provided for these young men. Verse 17. *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.* In other words, God gifted these young men with gifts and talents. They were good at learning, they were smart, and they demonstrated wisdom. Daniel had a unique gifting, the ability to understand and interpret dreams.

Here is what we learn from this. God equips His people to be effective in influencing the culture. These young men may have been indoctrinated by Babylonian professors, but God is who gave these men wisdom and ability.^{vi}

While we may not all have the same giftings from God, we are given those giftings by God. Therefore, God expects us to utilize those gifts, not for our own advancement and glory, but for the glory of God in a very dark world. God provides us with giftings, we are to utilize them in making a difference.

So, we've looked at living with conviction requires pursuing holiness and trusting God's provision. Thirdly, ...

3) Living with conviction results in a life of purpose.

Building upon the giftings given by God is the purpose that God gives. Look at verses 19-21 of Daniel 1. *19 And the king spoke with them, and among all of them none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Therefore they stood before the king.* *20 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.* *21 And Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus.*

A couple of things to point out here. Position and Perseverance. Because of their pursuit of holiness and because of their trusting, God gave these young men a purpose. He granted them a position of influence and also gave them a legacy.

Look at the position they were given by God. Second part of verse 19. *“They entered the king’s service.”* They served in these positions, positions of leadership, after being interviewed by king Nebuchadnezzar. These men worked hard to be influencers. And the king found them ten times better than all the other leaders.

This is not unlike the stories of both Moses and Joseph. The favor of God upon Moses caused him to be placed in Pharaoh’s family and ultimately in his court. Joseph demonstrated great aptitude and he ultimately became the second in command of Egypt.

I think it is important to point out that while all these men gained such positions of influence and that the favor of God was on their life, it wasn’t easy. Moses was run out of town. Joseph was sold into slavery and falsely accused and thrown in prison. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were thrown into a fiery furnace. Daniel was thrown in the lion’s den. And while they all faced trials, struggles and storms, God kept lifting them out of the storm.

God had a purpose for them in the position He placed them in. The same is true for us. The Lord has given you to Texas. The Lord has placed you in Mt. Pleasant, Talco, Mt. Vernon, and Sugar Hill. God has given you a position, a place, for a purpose. God sent you there to be an influencer!^{vii}

Not only did God give them a position but He also granted them perseverance, or longevity. Look, again, at verse 21 of Daniel 1. *21 And Daniel was there*

until the first year of King Cyrus. According to historical data, the first year of King Cyrus’s reign was 539 B.C.^{viii} If Daniel was 15 in 605 B.C., when he was taken to Babylon, then he was born in 620 B.C.^{ix} That means that he served in a place of influence from the time he was 18 until he was 81 years old.

In that time, he served as an advisor to Nebuchadnezzar, Darius, Belshazzar, and Cyrus, 4 different administrations. That’s longevity. That’s living a life on mission. Daniel could truly say what was later recorded in the Gospel of John, chapter 17, verse 4. *I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.*

The story of Daniel in this opening chapter, I believe, is an encouraging testimony to us today. When we experience trials and testing, we can trust that God is at work in and through those. And we, like Daniel, can be transformers of culture by living a life of conviction. That requires us to pursue holiness, trust God’s provision, and live a life of purpose. Let’s be thermostats and not thermometers.

CONCLUSION:

As we conclude the opening study here today, **I want to invite the band to come back up.** As they are on their way, I want you to consider something. Jesus is the greater Daniel.

Daniel was taken from the royalty of Jerusalem, Jesus from the royalty of Heaven. Daniel ultimately returned to royalty and Jesus ultimately ascended into Heaven where He sits at the right hand of the Father. Both men went from their home and entered a world that was dark and opposed to them. Both men were filled with The Holy Spirit. Both were surrounded by a few faithful friends that saw them through adversity and hardship. Neither man married nor fathered a child. Both men were forced to walk to their doom. Both stopped often to pray for wisdom throughout their journey. Both men were wrongly accused and arrested of false charges. Both men were placed in a tomb.^x

But Jesus is the one that conquered the tomb. And because of that fact, Daniel and Jesus are together in glory. Daniel’s faith is right now his sight. He is praising The Lord alongside departed saints and angels. Daniel’s ultimate victory does not lie in being victorious over lions, but that by faith, he has overcome the grave and is experiencing eternal life. You can know that same

peace today. The Bible says that we are all sinners that have fallen short of the glory of God. Our sinfulness has brought about eternal death in a real place called hell. But the Bible also says that Jesus died our death, in our place, that by faith in Him we might be forgiven of our sin and enjoy a relationship with God. We can have the certainty of Heaven when we die. All you have to do is simply place your faith and trust in Jesus as the Lord and Savior of your life.

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ Works consulted in preparation of this message: Travis Agnew, “*Daniel [Series Overview]*”, article published on travisagnew.org on August 13, 2020; Stephen R. Miller, *The New American Commentary: Daniel*, B&H Publishing, Nashville, 1994; Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Resolute: OT Commentary on Daniel*, David C Cook Publishing, 2000; Precept Austin, “*Daniel 1 Commentary*,” article written May 19, 2020, accessed at: https://www.preceptaustin.org/daniel_1_commentary, January 13, 2022; Troy Rackliffe, “*Daniel 1*,” preached at Glade Community Church in Daniels, WV, September 2020; Mark Driscoll, *Kingdom Down #1: The Spirit of Babylon vs. The Spirit of God*, accessed at: <https://realfaith.com/sermon-series/kingdom-down/> January 5, 2022; Skip Heitzig, “*I Dare You: Be Distinct*,” taught at Calvary Church Albuquerque on Sunday, January 6, 2013. Cody Dixon, “*Exposition of Daniel chapter 1*,” shared on January 8, 2022.

ⁱⁱ Travis Agnew, “*Daniel [Series Overview]*”, article published on travisagnew.org on August 13, 2020.

ⁱⁱⁱ Got the idea for this little quip from Mark Driscoll when he said, “You know you have faith when you pick vegetarianism willfully. Amen?”

^{iv} Cody Dixon, personal friend, “*Exposition of Daniel chapter 1*,” shared with me on January 8, 2022.

^v Study referenced in an article entitled, “*Is There Science Behind the Sabbath?*”, published by Sabbath Truth, posted on their blog. Accessed at <https://www.sabbathtruth.com/free-resources/the-sabbath-blog/post/id/22201/tis-there-science-behind-the-sabbath-> on January 13, 2022.

^{vi} Adapted from my mentor and friend, Troy Rackliffe, in his sermon notes entitled, “*Daniel 1*,” preached at Glade Community Church in Daniels, WV, September 2020.

^{vii} Idea taken from Mark Driscoll’s message.

^{viii} Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Resolute: OT Commentary on Daniel*, David C Cook Publishing, 2000, page 26.

^{ix} *Ibid.*, page 27.

^x This comparison was found in Mark Driscoll’s message. *Kingdom Down #1: The Spirit of Babylon vs. The Spirit of God*, <https://realfaith.com/sermon-series/kingdom-down/> accessed January 5, 2022.