

- Imagine, for just a moment, that you have been taken from your home land. Everything that you have known has changed. You are now under the rule of a completely different people. They speak a different language, and they do not serve the God of heaven. However, you have been chosen as person that might be of some good service to the king because you are young, good looking, healthy, and intelligent. You will be treated with great care and respect by being given the best the kingdom has to offer in sustenance and education.
- You might consider yourself a really lucky person to not be treated as a slave, but what will you do when those things that have been offered to you go against your convictions? What will you do when you have decided to not partake in the food of that foreign kingdom? Will you conform your convictions to enable you to do such things? Or will you make up your mind to stand firm in your faith and not waver for even a moment? You might recognize this situation as being the situation Daniel, at just around 15 years old, found himself in as he was taken captive by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar.
- Daniel 1 Summary
  - (vv.1,2) The Jews have been displaced and they are now being ruled by the Babylonians. This has happened as a punishment from God upon the Jews for their continued unfaithfulness.
  - (vv.3-7) The king requests for the “cream of the crop” to be brought before him so he can make some use out of them. He provides them with his choice foods and the best of education so they can serve him well. In order for them to be fully committed to the Babylonian cause and to forget their Jewish ties, they are given new Babylonian names to replace their Jewish names.
    - **Daniel (God is my judge)** -> Belteshazzar (a servant of Bel, whom Bel favors);
    - **Hananiah (the Lord is gracious)** -> Shadrach (young friend of the king);
    - **Mishael (who is what God is?)** -> Meshach (not much known about this names origins);
    - **Azariah (whom Jehovah helps)** - Abed-Nego (servant of Nebo).
  - (vv.8-14) Daniel had a conviction concerning the choice foods and wines of the king and was not able to partake of them. He felt as if this would defile him in some way. His 3 comrades held the same conviction. They inquired about alternative sustenance and through God’s blessing, faith, and a little persuasion they were able to have a test period for their alternative nourishment.
  - (vv.15ff) After the 10 day trial, Daniel and his friends are found to be in much better shape than the others. They were continually blessed by God in all facets of wisdom and Daniel could even explain visions and dreams. The king was pleased with the results and the 4 Israelites were insisted into this personal service. They were continually superior to the other aides and they remained in the kings service for all his days.
- I’ll suggest that this trial and the other situations that these men endured (fiery furnace & lion’s den) were all possible because of what we read in v.8 where it is said that Daniel made up his mind and his friends followed suit. Daniel had a conviction in his heart and he was going to stand firm in that decision for God. He was not going to be deterred from the service of God. Let’s consider 3 things that we can imply from this text that Daniel and his friends made up their minds to do that we can take away in application for our own faith.

**Make up your mind to...**

- I. ...not use excuses to sin.
  - A. Daniel and his friends could've given many logical excuses for why they should eat and drink of the king’s provisions.
    1. “We’re young and don't know any better.”
    2. “We’re young and we have plenty of time to make up for it.”
    3. “We’re in a new environment and nobody will judge us eating the food..”
    4. “We’re in a new environment and we need to fit in.”
    5. “We’re trying to stay alive here. ”
    6. “God and the rest of the Israelites will understand.”
  - B. We can make many of the same excuses, today, for not following God’s standard.
    1. Young people: “I’m young and don't know any better.”
    2. Young people: “I need to get it all out of my system now and I’ll straighten up later.”
    3. Adults: “I need to make a good first impression with this new job.”
    4. Adults: “I need the boss to like me a lot so I’ll (insert unethical/sinful action).”
    5. Adults: “I don’t want to be the social outcast.”
    6. Adults: “I don’t want to be ridiculed and talked bad about.”
  - C. God does not accept excuses. He only accepts obedience.
    1. It doesn't matt that Daniel and his friends were young, they still had a responsibility towards God.
    2. Many young people throughout Scripture did great things for God.

- a. Josiah was 18 when he turned around Israel.
- b. Mary was a young woman when she was given the responsibility of bringing Jesus into the world.
- c. Timothy was young in some regard because Paul told him to not allow others to look down at him because he was young. **(I Tim. 4:12)** He had great responsibility to those around him.
3. Jesus said that the one who desires to follow him must deny himself, that means any excuses he or she might be able to come up with. **(Luke 9:23)**
  - a. We make excuses when we don't want to conform.
  - b. "I know you said that God, but I really want this and here's a really good reason for why my desire is more important than what you want for me...."
- D. We must make up our minds to not make excuses to sin.

## II. ...be courageous for God.

- A. The 4 young men were taking a big risk by not eating the choice foods and drinking the best drink.
  1. The commander of the officials feared for his life because he reasoned that the 4 Israelites would not look as strong and healthy as the other young people their age.
  2. Logic tells us that he would be right, but Daniel and his friends put their faith in God and not logic.
  3. They were courageous and trusted in God that it would be fine, but I know they would've been willing to suffer for God.
- B. We must be courageous for God as they were.
  1. The word courage is loosely thrown around in our day and time.
    - a. Many would say it is courageous for a man who plays football to stand up and admit that he is a homosexual.
    - b. Man would say that it takes intense courage to admit who you are as far as sexual orientation.
    - c. To many it seems logical and progressive that people should not have to hide "who they are."
    - d. That is not courage. That is selfishness to their own desires and a rebellion against God, Who created us.
  2. The wisdom of God sometimes goes against the logic of man. Who will we side with?
  3. It is not courageous to sacrifice for a foolish and sinful cause.
  4. Courage is willing to stand up for God and not fearing what man can do to you. **(Matt. 10:28)**
- C. Jesus was courageous for us!
  1. God, Himself, suffered for us!
  2. He was slapped, beaten, stripped of His clothes, spit upon, mocked, and crucified for us. **(Matt. 26,27)**
  3. Jesus said that His followers would suffer because of Him. **(Matt. 10:22)**
  4. The apostles rejoiced when they suffered because they did it for Christ. **(Acts 5:41)**
  5. He was our example of courage and we must follow His actions.
- D. It begins by making up our minds to be courageous for God, no matter what may come.

## III. ...receive the reward through faithful obedience.

- A. Daniel and his friends knew that they would be blessed in their obedience.
  1. They might have suffered now, but they knew they would have a reward in the end.
  2. They were blessed immediately for their faith and courage.
- B. Are you determined to receive the reward for your obedience to God?
- C. God has promised to reward His faithful servants.
  1. Those who do the will of the Father will enter into heaven. **(Matt. 7:21-23)**
  2. Jesus died so that those who obey Him would have eternal salvation. **(Heb. 5:9)**
  3. A crown of life was waiting for those who obeyed in the face of persecution. **(Rev. 2:10)**
  4. Paul was ready to receive his crown for keeping his faith. **(II Tim. 4:7,8)**
- D. Jesus never promised an easy road to the reward.
  1. He said the road would be difficult. **(Matt. 7:14)**
  2. But Paul knew that Jesus would provide the means for the faithful person to succeed. **(Phil. 4:13)**
- E. Determination to trust in the Lord will help you remain faithful and receive the promised reward of heaven.

The fiery furnace and lions den are normally the first great stories that come to our mind in the book of Daniel. However, I'll suggest that those stories wouldn't have ever happened if it had not have been for **1:8** where Daniel made up his mind to obey God regardless of the cost. Have you made up your mind to obey God regardless of the cost? There will come a time in each of our lives where we will have to make the choice of either to obey God and suffer in some way, or to neglect our Lord and have it easier in this life. Which choice will you make? May God help us all to remain strong and faithful and always have our minds made up to obey His every word.