

DANIEL RESOLVED

Daniel 1:1-21

Key Verses 1:8,17

⁸ But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way...¹⁷ To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.

Good morning. My name is Pauline Park. I'm a second gen, daughter of Henry & Pauline Park from Columbus UBF. Currently I live in Philadelphia with my family. My husband, David Junkil Park, is the Korean Daniel – a young man without any physical defect, handsome, intelligent, and highly qualified. God blessed us with 2 beautiful children – Joshua, 4 yrs, and Jenna, 14 months. Last night we heard a powerful message by Sh Nate Turnock on Instrument of Righteousness. Daniel is a good example of an instrument of righteousness. Let's see how Daniel was used by God as his instrument. Let's pray.

Let's begin with a history lesson. Israel was God's chosen people. God rescued them from the bondage of slavery in Egypt and brought them to the Promised Land after wilderness training. God's hope was to make them into a holy nation in which God is the only king. He wanted them to be a shepherd nation that lived according to his words. But gradually they began to seek a powerful human king like other nations. They received what they wanted but it was the beginning of the fall of the kingdom. The kingdom was divided and eventually destroyed by the Babylonian Empire. In fact, this was God's punishment for the sins of the chosen people. They had ignored God's words. They ignored the Sabbath day and the sabbatic year. They had fallen into idol worship. God had given them many warnings through his servants but they were too stubborn to heed God's warning. Finally, God allowed Israel to be conquered by Babylon. Many people were taken to Babylon as captives. This was God's punishment, but also His wisdom, sovereignty and love. I was surprised that one of my favorite Bible verses was about the Babylonian exile. Jeremiah 29:11-14 says, "¹ For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. ¹² Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. ¹⁴ I will be found by you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile." God, in hope to restore His people, punished them, out of His deep love for them.

Look at verses 3-7. Here Daniel is described as one of the Israelites from the royal family or nobility, young, no physical defect, handsome, knowledgeable, quick to learn, qualified in every way to serve the king. In other words, perfect. These were the sons of the rulers of Israel. The future and hope of Israel. I was surprised to learn how young they were, teenagers, between 13-16 years of age, like David Noh. And King Nebuchadnezzar took them hostage. Why? First, to keep Israel's royalty in check through their sons. Second, to turn them into Babylonians – become leaders for Babylon and use their wisdom to aide Babylon. The king even gave them

new names to complete their transformation. Daniel's Jewish name meant, "God is my judge". His Babylonian name was Belteshazzar, meaning "The treasure of Bel". (The other names are written on the screen) Their Hebrew names represented their faith in God. Their new names were perversions, tributes to Babylonian gods. My dad named both my children. Joshua after general Joshua. His Korean name is 주영--주님께 영광 which means glory to God. Jenna's Korean name is 예나--예수님이랑 나 which means Jesus and me. We chose their names prayerfully with hope for what kind of people they would be. To change their names would be to change their identity completely. King Nebuchadnezzar's strategy was to educate the young Hebrews like Daniel in the Babylonian ways, transforming them with Babylonian culture and religion.

Daniel and his fellow Israelites could have felt lost and abandoned. Trapped, prisoners in a strange new world, with a brutal, powerful king who had no fear of God and could kill them in a minute if he wanted to. Though it's not specifically noted in the Bible, a majority of the Israelites probably did their best to blend in. That includes eating the food that was given to them. Read verse 8. "But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself in this way." "But Daniel" stands apart from the rest of the Israelites who did not stand up for their faith. It is an amazing paradox that while Israel was being punished for its idolatry and compromise, Daniel resolved not to compromise his faith and kept his identity as God's people.

You may think why it is such a big deal to eat the royal food. But Daniel was aware that the royal food and wine was sacrificed to idols. To him, partaking in eating the king's food would be the same as participating in idol worship. The Babylonian eating and drinking culture also involved feasting, lavishness, drunkenness and debauchery. To Daniel, the line was clear. So he resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine.

I remember when Dream Kim posted a black and white flag on her Facebook profile representing her faith in God-ordained heterosexual marriage when everyone else posted rainbow flags celebrating the legalization of gay marriage. Dream received many negative comments and backlash. It took her great courage to do what she did and I was so amazed at how she stood up for her faith. There is no place for absolute truth in this relative, all-inclusive, embracing all differences society. How do we take a stand? How do we handle the confusing gray areas? I don't think Daniel teaches us to be legalistic and draw lines here and there, but how we can not defile ourselves as we live in this world. I think all it takes is making one decision of faith at a time. To come before God and ask, "Would this defile me?" And like Daniel, God will lead you and direct you to the right path.

Once Daniel made the decision not to defile himself, he went to the chief official to ask for permission. This took courage. It could have been seen as a sign of rebellion. Punishable by death. Look at verse 10. "but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you." The official said no. He could lose his life over this matter. So what did Daniel do? Did he say, "Oh well, at least I tried." He did

not give up. Instead he went to the guard who was appointed to watch over Daniel. He even brought his friends. And this time he had a plan. He asked the guard to test them first for just 10 days on water and vegetables and see how they compare to those fed the royal food.

Nobody would blame Daniel for eating the royal food in his situation. But Daniel's faith wasn't before people. He had a clear identity and personal conviction to live before God. He put his life at risk whenever he made a stand. Because Daniel made a good start and took a clear stand in his faith, it set the foundation for his future life of faith. In Daniel 3, Daniel & his friends had to choose between bowing down to the king's image or being thrown into the fiery furnace. In Daniel 6, Daniel had to choose between not praying to God or facing the lion's den. In every single instance, Daniel chose to please God. Every single time he made the difficult choice.

Like Daniel, I had personal conviction as the only Christian Biology teacher in my department. The other two Biology teachers were hard-core atheists and evolutionists. I felt self-conscious and afraid every time it came to teach the evolution unit. The other teachers would make fun of students who tried to argue against evolution. Many people I know had lost their faith after studying evolution in school. So I resolved to be a strong Christian voice as a science teacher for my students. Because I took a stand against macro-evolution, the more theoretical portion of evolution, the principal had to sit in on my class because of potential controversy. Without preaching to them, I encouraged my students to look at all the origin-of-life theories and decide for themselves. Later on, I received a card in my mailbox from parents in the surrounding high school community, thanking God that I was teaching in their school. After the unit, I had many students show their appreciation and thanks for helping them navigate such a difficult topic.

Daniel's example shows us how we should live as exiles in this modern world. As Christians, we should live as God called us to, set apart. 1 Peter 2:11-12 says, "**11** Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. **12** Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us." It's ok if we don't fit in. It's ok to not belong. To miss out on crazy partying, owning a beach house with a yacht in the backyard and a mercedes benz in the driveway. Ultimately, these are all things that perish and fade. I belong to God. Our hope must be heavenward, our reward waiting for us in God's kingdom. We are all immigrants, not of just the U.S. but of earth. When we have this clear identity in our hearts, we can abstain like Daniel did, and choose to live a life that is pleasing to God. Amen.

Look at verse 17. God blessed their decision of faith and used them for His good purpose. At the end of the 3 years, Daniel and his friends were brought into the king's service. What was the result of their extensive training and testing? Look at verse 20. "In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom." Among everyone in the entire Babylonian empire, Daniel and his friends were not just above average, but ten times better than anyone else. Daniel is great, but God is infinitely greater and without God's help, Daniel is just a man who decided to go on a diet. Thankfully this story is not just about Daniel, but immersed in the

grace and workings of our God. From the beginning, all throughout his difficulties, God was with Daniel and lifted him up to greater heights than he could have ever achieved on his own.

Throughout the entire passage, God's hand was orchestrating every detail. In the beginning, we saw how God delivered Judah into Nebuchadnezzar's hands. We thought of how God had a greater plan to put Israel into Babylonian Exile. And God did not leave Daniel alone in Babylon. God had the chief official show favor and compassion upon Daniel. And Daniel's decision in and of itself was divinely inspired, moved by the Spirit, and through prayer, courage and strength given by God, Daniel became resolute in his decision and acted based on his faith. "We have a big God. Don't tell God how big your storm is, tell your storm how big your God is." (Repeat) We have an AMAZING God who can do literally anything He wants to. It was God who enabled Daniel and his friends to be knowledgeable and wise in every matter of wisdom and understanding. Only God can be glorified when ordinary men do extraordinary things in God's name. God is pleased when we make decisions of faith like Daniel, because it is in those difficult times that we can turn to God, depend on Him and grow deeper in our faith.

Living in Philly, away from my home and my parent's ministry, I feel like I've been growing and maturing in my faith. Through Galatians Bible study, I was introduced to a gospel-centered life, purely based on God's grace and Jesus' cross. I was freed from the legalism and work-based faith I grew up with. I grew as a wife, through several crazy cycles, that I need to respect my husband, that losing is actually winning, and to learn to appreciate and be thankful for the things he does instead of always demanding more. I also profoundly realized that my husband's love cannot satisfy me and that I should not put all of my hopes & expectations on him, but on God. I grew as a mom to understand our Father God's love for his children. I learned patience, sacrifice, a mother's heart and came to have more appreciation for my parents. Even though I strived to live by faith as a good wife, mom and coworker, unlike Daniel, I tried to do things by my own strength. Not depending on God. Recently, I became seriously ill after I caught the flu, which turned into a bad infection. I had severe pain in my belly and couldn't walk for 1 month. It was in weak moments like these, when I was sick and lying in a hospital bed or when I was so sleep deprived taking care of 2 kids, it's when I've been stretched to my limit, like preparing for this message, that have brought me on my knees before God, reminding me that I can do nothing by my own willpower. God continually reveals my need for Him and helps me to make decisions of faith to come to Him and seek Him. And when I depend on Him, He takes me to greater heights than I could have even imagined for myself. He continues to show our family how He wants to use us as house church to serve others and not just live for ourselves. I continually have to fight the desire from being family-centered and putting my husband's and my kid's interests first, to being more God-centered. I thank God for reminding me through this passage, that He has called us to live a life set apart from the world. I pray that I make a Daniel decision not just to live like the rest of the world, but to put God first in my daily life through beginning my day, not with korean dramas, but with prayer. Msn Moses challenged our ministry to write weekly testimonies as a matter of life and death. I also want to meditate on God's words by writing weekly testimonies. I pray that our family may be a serving family for our student ministry. When I transform my heart and mind to be more God-centered, and offer myself to Him, I pray to be open to God's leading and be used in accordance with His good will. I pray

that the decisions you make today and during the conference may be pleasing to God and may God's will be done through decisions made by faith. Amen.