

P R E A C H I N G T H E W O R D

DANIEL

The Triumph of God's Kingdom

Rodney Stortz

R. Kent Hughes, General Editor

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Daniel

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A Word to Those Who Preach the Word

There are times when I am preaching that I have especially sensed the pleasure of God. I usually become aware of it through the unnatural silence. The ever-present coughing ceases, and the pews stop creaking, bringing an almost physical quiet to the sanctuary — through which my words sail like arrows. I experience a heightened eloquence, so that the cadence and volume of my voice intensify the truth I am preaching.

There is nothing quite like it — the Holy Spirit filling one's sails, the sense of his pleasure, and the awareness that something is happening among one's hearers. This experience is, of course, not unique, for thousands of preachers have similar experiences, even greater ones.

What has happened when this takes place? How do we account for this sense of his smile? The answer for me has come from the ancient rhetorical categories of *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*.

The first reason for his smile is the *logos* — in terms of preaching, God's Word. This means that as we stand before God's people to proclaim his Word, we have done our homework. We have exegeted the passage, mined the significance of its words in their context, and applied sound hermeneutical principles in interpreting the text so that we understand what its words meant to its hearers. And it means that we have labored long until we can express in a sentence what the theme of the text is — so that our outline springs from the text. Then our preparation will be such that as we preach, we will not be preaching our own thoughts about God's Word, but God's actual Word, his *logos*. This is fundamental to pleasing him in preaching.

The second element in knowing God's smile in preaching is *ethos* — what you are as a person. There is a danger endemic to preaching, which is having your hands and heart cauterized by holy things. Phillips Brooks illustrated it by the analogy of a train conductor who comes to believe that he has been to the places he announces because of his long and loud heralding of them. And that is why Brooks insisted that preaching must be “the bringing of truth through personality.” Though we can never *perfectly*

embody the truth we preach, we must be subject to it, long for it, and make it as much a part of our ethos as possible. As the Puritan William Ames said, “Next to the Scriptures, nothing makes a sermon more to pierce, than when it comes out of the inward affection of the heart without any affectation.” When a preacher’s *ethos* backs up his *logos*, there will be the pleasure of God.

Last, there is *pathos* — personal passion and conviction. David Hume, the Scottish philosopher and skeptic, was once challenged as he was seen going to hear George Whitefield preach: “I thought you do not believe in the gospel.” Hume replied, “I don’t, but *he does*.” Just so! When a preacher believes what he preaches, there will be passion. And this belief and requisite passion will know the smile of God.

The pleasure of God is a matter of *logos* (the Word), *ethos* (what you are), and *pathos* (your passion). As you *preach the Word* may you experience his smile — the Holy Spirit in your sails!

R. Kent Hughes
Wheaton, Illinois

Preface

When Daniel had finished writing his book, he was confused and exhausted. He said, “I heard, but I did not understand” (Daniel 12:8a). Then he asked the Lord, “What will the outcome of all this be?” (v. 8b). In other words, “How will this all come together in the end?”

The Lord replied, “Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end [or the last days].” The words of the prophecy were sealed. The Lord would give no more prophecy about the future to Daniel, and he would not explain it anymore “until the time of the end.” We know from Acts 2:17 that “the last days” began at the time of the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.

The Apostle John tells us of an interesting event in Heaven in those days, described in Revelation 5:1-5. The Lamb who had been slain was standing beside the throne. In the right hand of Him who sat on the throne was a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. John wept, because he thought there was no one worthy to open the seals and explain the prophecies found inside.

Then the elders said to John, “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.” When he does so, the prophecies of Revelation 6 — 22 are revealed. They both explain in greater detail the things Daniel was asking about and add new prophecies about the return of Christ. The scroll of Daniel was unsealed by the Lamb through the writings of the New Testament.

This commentary on Daniel will use the light of the New Testament to unseal the scroll of Daniel in order to give a clearer understanding of his prophecies. By God’s grace and through the help of his Holy Spirit, you will not be as confused and exhausted when you finish this book as Daniel was when he finished writing it the first time.

Throughout this commentary and the pages of Scripture the God of Daniel is revealed to us. He is a God who loves his people and is in sovereign control over all the events of this world. He is concerned about our

holiness and our fears; so he shows us how he worked in Daniel, and he tells us about our future.

THE AUTHOR

The book claims to have been written by Daniel (Daniel 10:21). Also, Ezekiel recognizes Daniel as a historical figure:

Even if these three men — Noah, Daniel and Job — were in it, they could save only themselves by their righteousness, declares the Sovereign LORD. . . . as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, even if Noah, Daniel and Job were in it, they could save neither son nor daughter. They would save only themselves by their righteousness. (Ezekiel 14:14, 20)

Daniel documents the dates of the beginning of his book and the dates when he received each of the prophecies. If these dates are a lie and Daniel did not receive these prophecies between 605 B.C. and 536 B.C., then how can we believe anything else written in the book? Jesus trusted the content of the book of Daniel, for he quoted it in Matthew 24:15.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Before studying the book of Daniel, knowing some of the key people and the key dates of the history of Israel will be helpful.

1010-970 B.C.	King David rules over the united kingdom.
970-930 B.C.	King Solomon rules over the united kingdom.
966 B.C.	The Temple of the Lord is dedicated in Jerusalem.
930 B.C.	The Kingdom of Israel is divided into North and South.
740-681 B.C.	Isaiah warns of the coming judgment against Israel.
722 B.C.	Fall of the Northern Kingdom (Isaiah dies—681 B.C.).
626-585 B.C.	Jeremiah warns of coming judgment against Judah.
606 B.C.	Daniel taken captive to Babylon.
597 B.C.	Ezekiel taken captive to Babylon.
586 B.C.	Fall of the Southern Kingdom (Jeremiah dies—585 B.C.).
539 B.C.	Fall of Babylon to Persians.
536 B.C.	Cyrus decrees that the Jews can return to Jerusalem (70 years from the taking of the first captives in 606 B.C.).
530 B.C.	Daniel dies.
516 B.C.	Temple rebuilt (70 years from its destruction in 586 B.C.).

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Before studying this commentary on the book of Daniel, knowing the overview of the content of Daniel will be helpful for getting the big picture. We don't want to lose sight of the forest as we study the trees. Note in par-

ticular that the focus of the prophecies is limited in scope. Daniel does not prophesy about many different things, but rather about three main things that are repeated several times. He prophesies the first coming of the Messiah, the coming of Antiochus Epiphanes, and the second coming of the Messiah.

Each prophecy relates to one of these three. Both times the Messiah enters our world it will be preceded by a severe time of persecution for God’s people. The first time the Messiah came was preceded by the coming of Antiochus Epiphanes. The second time the Messiah comes will be preceded by the coming of the Antichrist.

You will notice the cyclical nature of Daniel’s apocalyptic literature. He first speaks of the Antichrist; then he introduces Antiochus. Next he tells us more about Antiochus before he tells us more about the Antichrist. Then Daniel switches the order one last time as he asks a question about the Antichrist, followed by one last question about Antiochus.

If the reader will keep these three main characters in mind — Antiochus, Messiah, and Antichrist — the prophecies of Daniel will be much easier to understand.

Now take a look at this brief overview of the book, noting the references to the three main characters.

DANIEL 1	Daniel and his three friends: men of conviction	Nebuchadnezzar II
*DANIEL 2	Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the statue of the four kingdoms	
	• Head of Gold:	Babylon (636-536 B.C.)
	• Chest and arms of silver:	Persia (536-333 B.C.)
	• Belly and thighs of bronze:	Greece (333-146 B.C.)
	• Legs of iron with feet of iron and clay:	Rome (146 B.C.-400 A.D.)

THE MESSIAH COMES THE FIRST TIME
THE KINGDOM OF GOD ENTERS OUR WORLD

DANIEL 3	Daniel’s three friends: men of faith	Nebuchadnezzar II
DANIEL 4	The conversion of Nabonidus	Nebuchadnezzar III
DANIEL 5	The handwriting on the wall	Belshazzar
DANIEL 6	Daniel in the lions’ den	Darius the Mede
*DANIEL 7	Daniel’s prophetic zoo of four kingdoms	Belshazzar (553 B.C.)
	• Lion	Babylon (636-536 B.C.)
	• Bear	Persia (536-333 B.C.)
	• Leopard	Greece (333-146 B.C.)
	• Beast	Kingdom of Antichrist

ANTICHRIST PREDICTED
THE MESSIAH COMES THE SECOND TIME
THE KINGDOM OF GOD COMES IN ITS FULLNESS

*DANIEL 8	Daniel’s vision of the ram and goat	Belshazzar (550 B.C.)
	• Ram	Persia (536-333 B.C.)
	• Goat	Greece (333-146 B.C.)

ANTIOCHUS PREDICTED

- *DANIEL 9 **Daniel's vision of the seventy weeks** **Darius (539 B.C.)**
THE MESSIAH COMES THE FIRST TIME
- *DANIEL 10 **Daniel's vision of the "son of man"** **Darius (536 B.C.)**
THE MESSIAH APPEARS TO DANIEL
- *DANIEL 11:1-35 **Daniel's vision of the kings of the south and north**
ANTIOCHUS PREDICTED
- *DANIEL 11:36 — 12:4 **Daniel's vision of the Tribulation and resurrection**
ANTICHRIST PREDICTED
- *DANIEL 12:5-7 **Daniel's question about the second great crisis**
ANTICHRIST PREDICTED
- *DANIEL 12:8-13 **Daniel's question about the first great crisis**
ANTIOCHUS PREDICTED

* denotes prophetic chapters

1

No Compromise

DANIEL 1:1-25

Dr. Bryan Chapell tells a story of the wife of a full-time student at Covenant Seminary. Like the wives of many seminarians, Karen was earning money to keep her husband in school and food on the table. In her case, Karen made her living as a quality-control inspector for a major pharmaceutical company.

One day, through faulty procedures, the automated machines produced a large order of syringes that became contaminated and therefore failed inspection. Karen reported the problem to her boss, but he quickly computed the costs of reproducing the order and made a “cost-effective” decision. Because so much money would be lost in replacing the syringes, the boss ordered Karen to sign the inspection clearance despite the contamination. She refused, but this did not get her off the hook.

Because of certain federal regulations, only Karen could sign the clearance forms. If Karen did not sign, the syringes could not be marketed. The boss urged and threatened, but Karen would not budge. The impasse between Karen and her superior led to a visit from the company president. He also computed the costs of reproduction and issued his decision: The forms must be signed. Karen would have the weekend to think over whether or not she would sign the clearances. The president told her that if she was still determined not to sign the forms on Monday, her job would be in jeopardy.

In fact, much more than Karen’s job would be in jeopardy. This was her only means of income, and it was a well-paying job, not easily replaced. Randy’s education and their family’s future were severely endangered. The hopes, dreams, and career plans of many years could be shattered as a result of the choice that had to be made in the next two days. When Dr. Bryan Chapell, the seminary’s president, told this story, he concluded with the fol-

lowing words: “For this young couple, all the theological jargon and doctrinal instruction about consecration, righteousness, and holiness suddenly came down to this one concrete decision: Could they afford to remain undefiled from the contamination the world of business practicalities urged Karen to approve?”¹ What would you do?

This couple’s predicament is similar to what God’s people have faced in all ages. The first chapter of Daniel well illustrates that there have always been *pressures* on God’s people to compromise their holiness. As the chapter unfolds we will also see how important the *preparation* to pursue holiness is. The chapter concludes with the demonstration of the *power* of personal holiness.

THE PRESSURE TO COMPROMISE HOLINESS (1:3-8)

The pressure that we all face was experienced by Daniel and his three friends. Daniel sets the stage to describe this pressure applied by the king in verses 3, 4:

Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility — young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king’s palace.

These were top-notch young men from the royal family and nobility in Israel. According to *Jerome’s Commentary on Daniel*, Rabbinic tradition holds that Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were descendants of King Hezekiah, based on Isaiah 39:7.² In that verse Isaiah speaks these words to King Hezekiah: “And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood who will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the King of Babylon.”

Daniel was probably in his early teens when he was taken captive, because he was still alive seventy years later when the captivity ended. Perhaps Daniel was thirteen to sixteen years old when he was taken captive around 606 B.C. Ashpenaz, a member of the pagan royal court, began to apply pressure on these teenagers. We and our children experience some of the same pressures.

There is pressure to change our thinking (1:4b): “He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians.”

Imagine the influence these pagan Babylonian teachers had on these teenagers. The Babylonians’ literature promoted their worldview, their view of man, their view of God, their view of sin, and their view of redemption,

which were all directly opposed to everything these young teens had been taught and believed while in Israel.

Through archaeological evidence Tremper Longman III concludes that undoubtedly one of the subjects Daniel and his friends would have been taught was the Babylonian art of divination.³ They learned how to make predictions by interpreting unusual terrestrial and celestial phenomena and by examining sheep livers. In Mesopotamia, omens were considered the primary way by which the gods revealed their will and intentions. When powerful communicators keep telling you the same thing over and over again, it is hard not to be influenced. But these methods of divination would all be diametrically opposed to what these young men had been taught from God’s Word. Daniel probably knew these words of Isaiah:

When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn. (Isaiah 8:19, 20)

Though Daniel and his friends went through the classes, they apparently resisted the pressure to change their thinking. This can be seen through the historical accounts of these young men in the chapters to follow.

The pressure on Christians to change their thinking today comes from the print media, movies, and television as well as from teachers. For example, we have all experienced the pressure of our society trying to change our thinking about homosexuality, calling it an alternate lifestyle. Books, even on the elementary level, teach children about “Heather who has two mommies.” They teach children that this is a good alternative. God calls it both shameful and a perversion in Romans 1:26, 27:

Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

In some cases the world has succeeded in changing our thinking on such subjects.

In his sermon on Romans 1:24-32, R. Kent Hughes said, “A mainline denomination’s magazine carried an admonishment that said essentially this: Homosexuality should be accepted as a variant lifestyle — the homosexual relationship is neither unnatural, sinful, nor sick.”²⁴

We need to stand firm and resist the pressure. Be encouraged that Daniel and his three teenage friends stood firm against the Babylonian attempts to

change their thinking. We will see what these Jewish teenagers and their parents did to prepare to withstand the pressure, because it is not easy. Christian, though the forces against you are great, take heart, stand firm, and dare to be a Daniel.

There is pressure to change our worship (1:6, 7).

Among these were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

The name Daniel means “*Elohim* is my judge.” *Elohim* is one of the Hebrew names for God. The name Belteshazzar means “May Bel protect his life.” Bel is one of the gods of Babylon. Hananiah means, “*Yahweh* is gracious.” *Yahweh* is the personal name of the God of the Bible. Shadrach means, “Aku is exalted.” Mishael means, “Who is what *Elohim* is?” while Meshach means, “Who is what Aku is?” Azariah means, “*Yahweh* is my helper,” and Abednego means “The servant of Nebo,” another Babylonian god.

As the March 26, 1976 issue of *Christianity Today* stated, “Albania has joined the list of countries taking away one of the most personal and private possessions of its citizens: their names. After all, someone named Abraham or Ruth or Mark might someday wonder where his name came from! That could lead to a time-consuming search for a Bible or other religious literature. In the process, the unfortunately named Albanian might absorb some of the teachings of the outlawed book. That result, in the view of the government, would be very bad.”⁵ The Babylonians changed the Hebrew teens’ names in an attempt to make them forget the true God and change their worship, but it appears throughout the entire book that Daniel never did forget the name he was given, which honored the true God. Even the king (in chapter 6), when Daniel was in the lions’ den, came to him the next morning and used his Jewish name saying, “Daniel, servant of the living God . . .”

The Babylonians removed God’s name from the Jewish young men then, and today in America secularists are removing God from our schools and from public life. For example, evolution is taught as a scientific fact, and the truth of God being the Creator is either repressed or openly attacked.

In a sermon entitled “Why I Believe in Creation,” D. James Kennedy of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church gave this interesting example of those who want to suppress the truth.

An article in *Time Magazine* said, “Last week, after years of study and calculation, two respected California astronomers, Allan Sandage and

James Gunn made the following announcement: “The universe will continue to expand forever.”

Sandage said about his finding: “It was a terrible surprise, because we have held that the universe is eternal. If it continues to expand forever, then it shows there was a beginning.” Dr. Gunn added that people will passionately hold to the idea that the universe is oscillating contrary to the evidence, because if they give it up, you have a beginning of the universe. If you have a beginning of the universe, then you have a Creator, a God, to whom you must answer.

Many want to dismiss God as the Creator of the universe, because a God that powerful would be worthy of our worship and our obedience. Some would put pressure on our children to change their views of the origin of the universe in order to change their heart and worship. Christian, though the pressure is great, take heart, stand firm, and dare to be a Daniel.

There is pressure to change our way of living (1:5, 8).

The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king’s table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king’s service. . . . 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.

Up to this point Daniel and his three friends had shown no outward resistance to their assimilation into Babylonian culture. They didn’t skip their Babylonian literature classes, and they answered to their Babylonian names. That is what makes this encounter so striking. Why did Daniel draw the line here? Why did he suddenly say, “No compromise”? What is wrong with eating the royal food and drinking wine? It was not that Daniel was a vegetarian or one who abstained from wine, because later (in Daniel 10) he refrained from meat and wine for a period of three weeks of mourning (vv. 2, 3). That implies that he normally ate meat and drank wine.

There were two problems with the royal food the king offered. First, some of the meat was unclean according to the Mosaic Law. The verb “defile” (*ga’al*) used in verse 8 denotes religious defilement. Daniel and his three friends were not willing to compromise by disobeying God’s commands in eating “unclean food.”

Second, all the meat served at the king’s table was offered to idols before it was eaten. In his book *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization*, A. Leo Oppenheim tells us about the care and feeding of the gods of Babylon. We learn in his book that sumptuous food would be offered to the gods, and after the meal, whatever was left would be brought to the

king's table as the royal food.⁶ Daniel would not compromise by eating meat offered to idols.

Revelation 2:14 says, "Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin *by eating food sacrificed to idols.*" In Daniel's day, eating food sacrificed to idols was a sin against God. Daniel was willing to be holy regardless of the cost, but he was not willing to compromise his holiness. Are you willing to take the risks that sometimes come with holiness?

These risks are very real. Karen did refuse to sign the clearance forms for the contaminated syringes. She lost her job because of her no-compromise decision. She was not willing to disobey God's command to be honest in all things.⁷

Here is another example that was closer to home for me. My youngest daughter, Bekah, loves to play soccer. One spring she tried out for a select team and made it. She was so excited. Then we found out that most of the games were on the Lord's Day. We called the coach and told him that Bekah would not be able to play in any of the Sunday games. He said that if she would not play on Sunday, she could not be on the team. (It is interesting to note that 2 Chronicles 36:21 says that ignoring the Sabbath was a primary reason for the seventy-year captivity that took Daniel and others to Babylon.)

This was a great disappointment, but Bekah chose to remain undefiled. She dared to be a Daniel and stood firm for the Lord. To some it seemed like such a small thing. For Daniel, not eating the meat was a small thing, but it prepared him for much bigger challenges later in his life, as we will see in later chapters. Remember, he who is faithful in small things will be faithful in greater things.

Whenever we pretend that walking in holiness is easy, we fail to prepare those who must take a stand in this world. The time will come for every believer when such a stand must be made. Look with me at Daniel and his preparation to pursue holiness.

THE PREPARATION TO PURSUE HOLINESS (1:1, 6, 9, 10)

Three young teenagers living far away from home — how could they be so strong? How could they stand so firm against the pressures of the Babylonian culture? There had to be some serious preparation. Just as a soldier who goes into battle is prepared before he goes to the front lines, so we as Christians must take seriously our preparation to pursue holiness. Daniel experienced three influences.

There was the influence of the church (1:1).

"In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it."

If Daniel was sixteen years old in the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim (606 B.C.), that means he was born in 622 B.C. Do you know what incredible event took place that year? Josiah, who became king of Israel when he was eight years old, opened the doors of the Temple of the Lord that had been sealed shut by his grandfather Manasseh. Josiah did that when he was eighteen years old.

Inside the temple, the priests rediscovered the Word of God that had been lost. The priests began to teach the people God’s Word, and a great revival began in Israel. Daniel grew up in a living, vibrant church devoted to the Word of God — a church that did not compromise the teaching of Scripture.

My wife and I have been so thankful for the faithful teaching of God’s Word in our church congregation. From the preaching ministry through Sunday school, from our Christian school through the youth ministry, our three girls have learned the Word of God through faithful teachers who taught the whole counsel of God and did not compromise. Our children and young people have been prepared to apply God’s Word to the difficult situations of our world. They have been challenged not to compromise their holiness. Today there seem to be very few churches that teach the Word without compromise.

There is the influence of parents (1:6).

“Among these were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.”

We don’t really know anything about Daniel’s parents except that they named him “God is my judge.” That gives us a small glimpse as to the high view of God they had, which they passed on to their son Daniel. It was as if his parents said, “You will not always have to give an account to us. But one day you will give an account to our great God who made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them. He is watching over you always. He knows what you think, and he sees all you do. He is alone is your judge; so watch your life and doctrine closely.”

The psalmist likens our children to “arrows in the hand of a warrior” (Psalm 127:4). We have about eighteen to twenty years of strong influence in the lives of our children to shape them and sharpen them as we would an arrow. The psalmist says that we need to “tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done” (Psalm 78:4). We must first introduce them to the mighty, personal God who loves them and has blessed them.

Then the psalmist says we are ready to teach the commands of God. The next three verses say:

He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would

tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands.

Through the teaching of God's Word in the home, and as a result of consistently living it in our homes, our children will come to know God personally and will be ready to walk in holiness. We will shoot the arrows out of our nest and into the world, and "They will not be put to shame when they contend with their enemies in the gate" (v. 5).

The godly influence of his parents along with the support and influence of the Church of Israel prepared Daniel for a life of holiness with no compromise. But there was one more very important influence. This was the most important influence of all.

There is the influence of the Lord (1:9, 10).

Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel, 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."

When Daniel asked Ashpenaz for permission to avoid eating the food sacrificed to idols, Ashpenaz was afraid. But God was at work in the heart of that man. Daniel 1:9 says, "God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel." If God was moving the heart of a pagan official, how much more does he work in the heart of one who believes in him. According to verse 17, it was God who gave knowledge and understanding to Daniel and his friends.

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.

Apart from God's work in our heart, we cannot walk in holiness. Jesus said:

Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15:4, 5)

To remain or abide in Christ you must first have received him as your personal Lord and Savior. The abiding in Christ continues as you listen to him through the reading and studying of God's Word and speak to him

through prayer, asking for the grace to apply his Word to your life. As you develop these disciplines, you will bear the fruit of holiness.

In order to overcome the pressure to compromise our holiness, we need to have an adequate preparation to pursue holiness. We need to be bathed in the teaching of God's Word through our parents and the church. We also need a life of abiding in the vine, Jesus Christ, for apart from him we can do nothing and will compromise. But when we dare to be a Daniel in a world full of compromise, we will discover the power of personal holiness.

THE POWER OF PERSONAL HOLINESS (1:11-14)

Daniel then spoke to a guard appointed by Ashpenaz, because that official was too afraid of the king. This is what Daniel said:

Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see.

Daniel did not want the credit for their appearance to go to the king and his training process. He wanted God to receive the glory.

His personal choice of holiness had a powerful influence on three areas of his person (1:15-17, 20).

At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead. 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.

First, Daniel's *body* "looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food" (v. 15). Second, his *spirit* was in tune with God, who gave him a special ability to understand visions and interpret dreams of all kinds (v. 17). Third, his *mind* was sharp. "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" (v. 20). They were only teenagers beginning their career, and already they were head and shoulders above grown men. God does bless his people in a unique way in body, mind, and spirit when they dare to be Daniels, walking in holiness and refusing to compromise.

Remember Karen, forced to leave her job at the pharmaceutical company? God did bless her. Because she would not sign the clearance forms

for the contaminated syringes, the order was not delivered to the customer on time. Officials of that company investigated the delay and discovered how Karen had protected them from the contaminated syringes, even at the cost of her own job. The customer then hired Karen and increased her pay.⁸

Paul writes in 1 Timothy 4:8, “Physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.”

His personal holiness had an influence on three influential kings of Babylon (1:18-21).

At the end of the time set by the king to bring them in, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. 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. And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.

According to verse 21, Daniel remained in the palace until the first year of Cyrus, King of Persia. He and his friends had an influence on Nebuchadnezzar II (606-560 B.C.) in the first three chapters of Daniel. He had an influence on Nebuchadnezzar III (555-539 B.C.), also called Nabonidus, whose pride was broken and who surrendered to the Lord in Daniel 4. Then he influenced Belshazzar (553-539 B.C.), who saw the handwriting on the wall in Daniel 5. Daniel was there to interpret the writing and give the message to the king. Daniel had a powerful influence on these three Babylonian kings, even though the kings were in authority over him.

When my daughter, Bekah, told the coach that she would not play on the Lord's Day, the coach told her that he was sorry, but the league would not allow a team or an individual to play unless they played on Sunday. She was told that this could not be changed. She was very disappointed.

I do not know the details of what happened, but about an hour later the coach called and said that they could play all their games on Saturday if they would be willing to play two games on Sundays. He agreed to do that, and so did the other girls. There is a powerful influence of personal holiness that sometimes is missed in our quickness to compromise.

I do not want to give the impression that everything always works out perfectly according to this world's standards when we practice holiness. The world may readily praise idealism, but it rarely tolerates ideals. The world did not, could not, and would not understand Jesus. Why, then, should we expect the world to understand us if we stand up for him and his Word? The Holy One suffered at the hands of sinful men and was crucified by them. Should we expect to be treated any differently? Paul writes in

2 Timothy 3:12, “In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”

His personal holiness had an influence on his three friends (1:7, 8).

The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego. 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.

All four young men were given new names, but it was Daniel who first resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine. And Daniel’s three friends followed his lead. Not only that, but two chapters later in this book we will see these three young men standing all by themselves in front of a fiery furnace facing death. Daniel is nowhere to be seen. Remembering the resolve that Daniel had alone and how he brought them into the test, they then stood firm without compromise before a powerful king in a test bigger than the first.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.” (3:16-18)

All of God’s people face pressure to compromise their holiness. We all need to have adequate preparation to pursue holiness with the realization that personal holiness is a powerful influence on ourselves and on those around us, preparing us for future challenges.

My friend Bryan Chapell worked for a major road construction crew in western Tennessee one summer while he was in college. It was a great paying job, and since jobs were hard to come by, it was important that he keep this one.

One morning his supervisor told him he was doing such a good job that he was going to get a special privilege. The man owned a hunting lodge nearby, and he wanted Bryan to spend a day or two at the lodge enjoying the outdoors. Bryan thanked him for the privilege but explained that he really needed the money. The boss told him that was no problem because he would keep him on the payroll.

He was off like a shot to the lake. That evening Bryan was at the lodge eating catfish when the phone rang. It was his father. When he had gotten home from work, his mother explained where Bryan was and under what

arrangements. The voice on the other end of the line asked, “What are you doing collecting company pay without doing the work?”

Bryan had not thought of it that way. He didn’t want to think of it that way. He argued, “Dad, I can’t go back to my boss and tell him what he asked me to do is not ethical. He will be offended and fire me. How am I going to get through college if I do not have this job?”

His father answered, “I know you need this job to prepare for what you want to do. I also know what you need to prepare for life . . . and this is not it.” What would you do? Bryan went home. God prepared him for life. Today he is president of Covenant Theological Seminary.

Notes

CHAPTER ONE: NO COMPROMISE

1. Bryan Chapell, *Standing Your Ground* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), pp. 19, 20.
2. Jay Braverman, *Jerome's Commentary on Daniel: A Study of Comparative Jewish and Christian Interpretations of the Hebrew Bible* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1978), pp. 67, 68.
3. Tremper Longman III, *Daniel*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), p. 50.
4. R. Kent Hughes, *Romans*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), p. 45.
5. Quoted in Donald K. Campbell, *Daniel: Decoder of Dreams* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1977), p. 10.
6. A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 183-197.
7. Chapell, *Standing your Ground*, p. 23.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 28, 29.

CHAPTER THREE: REVEALER OF MYSTERIES

1. *History of Rome* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls), pp. 382, 383.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 383.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 390
4. Tremper Longman III, *Daniel*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), p. 82.

CHAPTER FOUR: FAITH STANDING BEFORE THE FIRE

1. Philip Yancey, *Where Is God When It Hurts?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1977), p. 104.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 109, 110.
3. *Trinity Hymnal* (Atlanta: Great Commission Publications, 1991), p. 108.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. Anonymous, *He Maketh No Mistake* (available from various sources; e.g., www.webedelic.com/church/mistaket.htm).
7. Bryan Chapell, *Standing Your Ground* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), pp. 88, 89.
8. *Trinity Hymnal*, p. 108.