

THE KING'S FOOD

Daniel 1

PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scripture for this lesson. First let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word.

Introduction

Daniel, a young Jewish boy about fifteen years of age, suddenly found himself uprooted from his family, his place of worship and his homeland. He was placed in a pagan environment under a program designed to transform his cultural, political and religious loyalties. Could such a young believer retain his faith in an environment where it would be far easier to conform than to persist? This question could well be asked of any believer today. The first test of his faith was about eating the king's food.

Aim of the Lesson

Produce in believers an robust resolve to persevere in pleasing God rather than pleasing men.

"Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself" (Daniel 1:8).

Outline of the Lesson (Use the Study Notes to add to this lesson plan as the Spirit leads you.)

I. The Defeat of Jerusalem (1:1-2)

Judah had grievously sinned against God and so she was chastened by God through Nebuchadnezzar. God would not let her get away with her sin. God has a plan and program for His people and His people cannot disrupt that plan and program. His people can delay God's plan and program through their sin and disobedience, but they cannot derail it. God will accomplish what He has promised to do.

When Judah gave herself over to the worship of idols, God gave her over to the rule of Nebuchadnezzar. Likewise, any nation that leaves God's principles as stated in the Bible will soon find itself given over to a conquering enemy. God may use human means to accomplish His will, but it is He Himself Who orders the calamity upon the disobedient.

We need to trust God when it seems the world is winning the war against us. We need to believe that tough times are good for us. Read James 1:2-4, Hebrews 12:5-17 and Romans 8:26-39 for a godly perspective.

II. The Deportation of the Elite (1:3-7)

It is interesting that Daniel and his three godly friends were among the elite of their day. God's children, who are living in this world, do not need to be poor, uncouth, uninformed, unknown and unbending in order to be spiritual, but they must be faithful to God and obey His Word no matter what their social standing and abilities may be.

It is almost inevitable in a pagan society that situations will eventually arise that will directly challenge the believer's obedience to Scripture. That is what Daniel and his friends faced when they were told about the food that they were to eat from the king's table. They knew that eating this food would violate several dietary laws of God, but in addition to this fact, they would be eating food that had been offered in the worship of the king's gods. Eating this food would give the impression to others that they were dependent on pagan gods for nourishment to give them strength. This would be a bad testimony because they wanted others to know that they depended on the God of Israel for nourishment and strength.

God does not promise to keep His children from difficult and trying circumstances (Daniel and his godly friends suffered captivity, not because of their own sins, but because of the sinfulness of their nation). But God does promise to keep His children while they are in those difficult and trying circumstances. This is the thrust of Christ's prayer in John 17:9-18. Daniel and his friends had to undergo many changes in

their lives, even the changing of their names, but their confidence was in God to keep them in the midst of all these changes, and He did keep them.

If we know God is in control of our lives, we can suffer with a gracious attitude. All things will work out for good to those who love Him (Rom 8:28). When we must make big changes in our lives, we will adjust and accept them if they do not force us to give up our God-given convictions.

III. The Determination of Daniel (1:8-16)

Daniel made a difficult decision when he decided he would not defile himself with the king's food. He knew that he would have to make his decision known to his heathen supervisor who might not be sympathetic with his God-given convictions. He also knew that he might suffer harsh punishment for trying to change the king's order and possibly the king would order him to be killed as a warning to the other captives. No doubt, many other problems crowded in upon his mind as he faced this decision, but he determined to be loyal to God whatever the cost. Therefore, he boldly made his request to have his daily diet changed.

Daniel was not given permission to have his diet changed by the chief of the captives, but neither was he denied this request. So he went to a lesser official with his request. He did not give up without making an earnest effort to have his diet changed. A resolution without persistent action is mere wishful thinking. Daniel was determined to do right no matter how much easier it would be to compromise. His efforts were finally rewarded when this official agreed to a short ten-day test.

God was pleased to bless Daniel and his three friends because of their faith and obedience to Him (Heb 11:6; Jn 14:21). As a result, God blessed them physically during the next ten days so that their appearance and health surpassed that of those who ate the king's food. Furthermore, God blessed them with good health for the entire three-year period so that they never had to eat the king's food.

When our faith is challenged, we must not yield to the temptation to compromise. God will provide a way to escape. We must determine to work with the Lord until a solution is found. We must be willing to take some risks and persist in doing what is right rather than yield to sin.

IV. The Discernment of the Godly (1:17-21)

Daniel and his three friends learned that their abilities were related to their dependability. God tested all of the young Hebrew men to prove them, but only four passed the test. Daniel and his three friends were faithful to God in one small area, but they were richly rewarded by God in a very large area. He sharpened their abilities for a promotion in Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom, greater than they could have dreamed possible (cf Mt 25:21).

An obedient, God-fearing believer can be used of God in his surroundings as a testimony of God's grace. Notice how this powerful king felt toward them: (1) he admired these young men and the abilities that God had given them; (2) he entrusted them with great responsibilities in his kingdom; (3) he consulted them on an administrative level; and (4) he found their work to be far superior to that of all his other counselors.

We must dare to be like Daniel and be faithful to God without compromise. He will bless us exceeding abundantly above all that you could ask or think (Eph 3:20). It pays to persist in doing that which is right. Whether we are respected or despised by unbelievers, we will be honored by the Lord when we do right. He will bless us when we live a holy life.

GOD WILL HELP US DO RIGHT IN THE SIGHT OF ALL MEN.

Note to the teacher: Ask your students questions from the Student's Lesson and appoint different ones to read the Scriptures where the answers can be found. After a right answer is found, share other truths you have gleaned from your study of the Bible, from the Study Notes and from the Teacher's Plan. Make applications to the students' lives where they fit (some are found in the Teacher's Plan). This approach will keep the interest of your students.

