

“DARE TO BE A DANIEL”
NO. 2291

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JANUARY 15, 1893
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“But 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.”*
Daniel 1:8

VERY much of our future life will depend upon our earliest days. I like a remark of Mr. Ruskin’s that I remember to have read, though I cannot quote it verbatim. He says, “People often say, ‘We excuse the thoughtlessness of youth,’” but he says, “No, it never ought to be excused. I had far rather hear of thoughtless old age, when a man has done his work—but what excuse can be found for a thoughtless youth? The time for thought is at the beginning of life and there is no period which so much demands, or so much necessitates, thoughtfulness as our early days.”

I would that all young men would think so. They say that they must sow their “wild oats.” No, no, my dear young friend, think before you sow such seed as that and remember what the reaping will be. See whether there is not better corn to be found than wild oats and try to sow that. Then think how you will sow it and when you will sow it, for if you do not think about the sowing,—

“What will the harvest be?”

If there is any time when the farmer should think, it is surely in the early stages of the ploughing and the sowing. If he does not think then, it will be of small avail for him to think afterwards.

Daniel was a young man and he did think. It was his glory that he so thought that he came to a purpose, and he purposed, not with a kind of superficial “I will,” but he “purposed in his heart,” and gave his whole self to a certain definite purpose which he deliberately formed. He was a young man—he was also a captive—and that rendered it the more remarkable that he should come to such a decision.

He had been stolen away from his father’s house and carried into a foreign land. And you know what men say, “When you are in Rome, you must do as Rome does.” But here was a young man in Babylon who would not do what Babylon did—a youth in a king’s court, who would not eat what the king ate or drink what the king drank—a captive whose very name had been changed in order to make him forget his country and his God, for the change in name, as I told you in the reading, was meant to be significant of a change in religion.

But though they might change Daniel’s name, they could not change his nature, nor would he give up anything that he believed to be right. Captive as he was, he had a right royal soul, and he was as free in Babylon as he had been at Jerusalem, and he determined to keep himself so, for he “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.”

Oh, that we had a multitude of young men who knew how to put their feet down! We have a great number now who are watching to see where to put their foot down, and they will try to put it down, not where it is most solid ground, but where it is most turfy, and easy, and soft to the feet. May God give us back the old grit that used to be in old-fashioned Christians, to whom custom was nothing, but God’s Word was everything—to whom it mattered not whether it brought loss or gain—but they did the right and followed the right, cost what it might!

Now, it was because Daniel, while yet a youth, a captive, a student, was so decided in what he did, that his after life became so bright. He would never have been called “a man greatly beloved” if he had not been made by grace a youth greatly decided. Neither would he have advanced to the reign of Cyrus, as we read just now, if he had not stood firm in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar.

You shall read the evening of life in the morning of life, and you shall decide what your evening is to be by what your morning is. God help you, who are beginning life, for if God begins with you and you begin with God, your life will be one of happy usefulness which will have a truly blessed end!

I am going to talk just now, not so much about Daniel, as about the whole subject of a spirit of decision in such a time as this. Our first head will be that *there are temptations to be resisted* by us, as there were by Daniel. Secondly, *there are right methods of resisting temptation*. And thirdly, *there are certain points which will have to be proved by experience* while we are in this process of fighting against temptation.

I. THERE ARE TEMPTATIONS TO BE RESISTED.

There never was a man yet who had faith and who had not trials. Wherever there is faith in God, it will be tested at some time or other—it must be so. It cannot be that the house shall be builded, even on the rock, without the rains descending, and the floods coming, and the winds beating upon that house. Though it shall not fall, yet it shall be tried by a force that would make it fall were it not divinely sustained.

Now, first, look at Daniel’s temptations. In his case, *the temptation was very specious*. He was told to eat the portion of food that, every day, came from the king’s table. Could he want any better? And he was commanded to drink the measure of wine, generally the best in the world, that was sent from the king’s table. He might have fared like a prince. Could he have any objection to that?

He had no objection except this—that it would defile him. Do you understand what he meant by that? There were certain foods used by the Babylonians, such as the flesh of swine, the flesh of the hare, and of certain fish, that were unclean, and when these came from the king’s table, if Daniel ate them, he would be breaking the law of Moses as given in the Book of Leviticus, and thus he would be defiled. Remember that the food which was allowed to Israel was to be killed in a certain way. The blood must be effectually drained from the flesh, for he that ate the blood defiled himself thereby.

Now, the Babylonians did not kill their beasts in that way and the eating of flesh which had not been killed according to the law would have defiled Daniel. You know how careful the Jews are to this day with regard to the butchering of the food they eat. More than that, usually such a king as Nebuchadnezzar, before he ate food, dedicated it to his god. Bel-Merodach was greatly venerated by Nebuchadnezzar as god, so that a libation of wine was poured out to Merodach, and a certain portion of food was put aside, so that, in fact, it was offered to idols—and Daniel felt that he would be defiled if he ate of meat which might be unclean, and which was certain to be offered to idols—it would be breaking the law of God—so Daniel would not eat it.

But the temptation to do so must have been very strong, for somebody would say, “Why, what difference can it make what you eat or what you drink?” Under the Christian dispensation it might be another matter, but under the Jewish dispensation it made a great deal of difference whether a man ate or drank certain things.

Others would say, “Why is Daniel so particular? There have been other Jews here who have unhesitatingly eaten the king’s meat. We read of king Jehoiakim that he had a portion every day from the king’s table and he does not seem to have made any objection. Why does this young fellow put his back up so and make himself so odd, and so different from everybody else? There is no use in being so strict and sticking out about little things.” So the temptation came to Daniel with great speciousness.

Then, *the temptation seemed the road to honor*. To consent to eat of the king’s meat and to drink of the king’s wine, seemed to be the way to get on in Babylon. They would say to Daniel, “Surely, if you begin by objecting to what the monarch sends you from his table, you will never get on at court. People with a conscience should not go to court.”

I do not say that today, but I do think that they ought not to be members of Parliament. It must be wonderfully hard for a man with a conscience to go in and out there. But for Daniel to begin with a conscience like this, so particularly tender that it was offended by a glass of the king's wine or a morsel of the king's meat, why, any good old fatherly man would have said, “My boy, you will never get on—your religion will always stand in your way. I am sure you will never come to be much.” That would have been a great mistake, however, for Daniel became a great ruler and he prospered in the world through that very conscientiousness which it was thought would spoil all his prospects.

Somebody would whisper in Daniel's ear, “It is *the law of the land*. The king, who is supreme, has ordered that you should eat this portion and drink this measure of wine each day.” Yes, but whatever the law may be and whatever custom may be, the servants of God serve a higher King and they have but one rule and one custom, “We ought to obey God rather than man.” They are ready to be the most obedient subjects up to a certain point, but when the law of God comes in, then are they dogged to a degree of obstinacy. They can burn, but they cannot turn—they can die, but they cannot deny the law of the Lord their God.

In Daniel's case, if he had done what it was proposed to him to do, *it would have been giving up the separated life*. He felt that, if he constantly fed upon the luxurious food of the king, he would be reckoned to be a Chaldean like the king, and so, to keep up his separation as belonging to the chosen seed, of whom Balaam prophesied, “The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations,” Daniel would not eat of the royal fare which was provided for him. Had he done so, he would have melted into a Chaldean and given up being an Israelite, to whom belonged the promises.

This is the temptation of the present day. Profess to be a Christian, but float along the common current of the world. Take the name of a Christian and go to your place of worship, and go through your ceremonies—but do not bring your religion into your business. Act as other people do. This is the temptation of the time—as the bulk of men think, so think you—and as the of men say, so say you. And as the bulk of Christian professors talk, so talk you.

This is the Satanic temptation which is wrecking our churches and doing I wot not how much mischief to men of God. But Daniel, though tempted strongly to do like that, would not yield. He “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.”

Now, in our own case, what are the particular temptations to which we, as believing men and believing women, are exposed?

I cannot go into the question of individuals, but I can imagine some one here tonight who is in a position where he is asked to do what it is not right for him to do. But he says, “I shall be discharged if I refuse to do it. I know others do it and I must do it.” My dear young fellow, allow me to put before you Daniel, who purposed in his heart that he would not eat the king's meat.

I talked, the other day, with a gentleman, who was the trustee for one of the wealthiest men in England, and who now is trustee of the money that the same gentleman has left to all his children. Those children have grown up and have come to years of maturity, but they still make him the trustee, paying him for looking after all their money, which is an immense amount. I was asking him how it was that he gained the confidence of the family so that they put him in such a position where all that they have is under his care and discretion.

He said that he remembered, when he was but a boy, the head of the establishment said to him one day, “Say that I am out,” and he replied, “Please, sir, I could not say that, for it would not be true.” Of course the master was very angry and told him that he must not bring his scruples there, or he would never get on in life—but he never asked him to tell a lie any more—and when somebody was wanted to act as confidential clerk, that young fellow was selected, and knowing him to be one who would be faithful and true, his master took the opportunity to raise him, and he put implicit confidence in him from that hour.

Sometimes you will find that to be out and out for the right will be the making of you. I would not urge integrity upon you from such a motive, still, since the devil will tell you that it will be the ruin of you, I will urge you to stand fast to the right, to speak the truth at all times, to be straightforward, for you will find that honesty is the best policy. Any man who speaks the truth will find it the best thing in the long run. To fence, to prevaricate, to temporize, to try to hold with the hare and run with the hounds, involves you in a world of difficulty and trouble. Be straight as Daniel was. The Lord help you to be so!

But now it comes to Christian people in another way. *Some would tempt us to assist the cause of God by amusements.* Christian people are asked to go to places, well, very doubtful places, to say the least, and sometimes this evil is introduced into religion till, as one of our friends said most truly in prayer tonight, they have brought the theater into the house of God. They have really done so and brought back chaos and old night, primeval darkness.

Oh, that God would speak, again, and say, “Let there be light,” and chase these things of darkness once for all away! I charge every Christian here to make his resolve that, if others do these things, as for Daniel, he has purposed in his heart that he will not defile himself with the king’s meat or with the wine which the king drank.

So today, again, there is *the temptation of love for intellectual novelty.* Instead of the old, old Gospel, and the old, old Book, for which God be thanked forever, we are to place science, which is generally conjecture, in the place of revelation—and the thoughts of men are to cover and bury the sublime thoughts of God.

I see ministers and churches deluded and led astray by these temptations. As for me, if no one else will say it, I purpose in my heart not to defile myself with this portion of the king’s meat nor with the wine which he drank. We need still to have old-fashioned believers who will sing the verse we sang just now,—

***“Should all the forms that men devise
Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I’d call them vanity and lies,
And bind the Gospel to my heart.”***

God send us many Daniels of that sort!

And besides this, we have, nowadays, *the temptation to general laxity.* People do, even Christian people do, what Christian people should not do. And they excuse themselves by quoting the example of other Christians, or by saying, “We are not so precise as our fathers were.” Has God changed? Is there not a text that says, “The Lord thy God is a jealous God”?

Does He permit His people to sin and take pleasure in it? And are we to forget that precept, “Be ye holy, for I am holy”? Is there to be no separation from the world, and is it no longer true that, “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him”? Is there no such text as this, “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the LORD, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, saith the LORD Almighty”?

I pray you, brothers and sisters, now, if never before, tie everything up as tightly as you can. The storm is so heavy that you need to go now with close-reefed sails. Oh, for a Daniel’s declaration that you will not defile yourself with the portion of the king’s meat or with the wine which he drank!

I could continue long at this point, but I have given you the general principle which you can work out for yourselves. Christians have meat to eat of which the world knows not. We have our re-creation—that is the way to pronounce recreation—re-creation. We go to our Creator and He makes us anew. We have our nights of holy mirth. We have our days of delight.

There is a King, a portion of whose meat we rejoice to eat and of whose wine we delight to drink. But as to questionable things, things of the world, and all that tends towards departure from the living God, we say that, by His grace, we determine not to defile ourselves therewith.

II. Now I come to the second point. THERE ARE RIGHT METHODS OF RESISTING TEMPTATION.

And the first is that *the heart must be set*. “Daniel purposed in his heart.” He looked the matter up and down, and he settled it in his heart. Before he asked Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego anything about it, he had made up his own mind. Oh, for a made-up mind! Oh, for the man who knows how to look at his compass and to steer his vessel whither he ought to go!

God grant you grace, young man, to nail your colors to the mast and to be determined that you will keep to the right course, come fair wind or come foul. Daniel had settled it in his heart. The grace of God is a great heart-settler. Where it comes, men become firm and positive, for the Lord teaches them to profit.

The next thing is that *the life must be willing*. Daniel was helped in carrying out his resolution by his own personal character. God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. Whenever a man is brought into favor and tender love, and is a good man, there is something about him that has commended itself. There is a something about him that is lovable, or he would not have been loved.

It is of no use for a man to say, “I have made up my mind upon certain things,” and to keep doggedly fighting over those matters, while, at the same time, the whole of his life is unkind, ungenerous, and unlovable. Yes, by all manner of means be a martyr if you like, but do not martyr everybody else, for it is very possible to get so much grit in you that you become all grit.

There are some who have carried firmness into obstinacy and determination into bigotry, which is a thing to be shunned. Yield everything that may be yielded. Give up mere personal whims and oddities, but as for the things of God, stand as firm as a rock about them. God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince who was set over him, and there must have been in him a generosity and frankness and nobleness of character, which even the mighty Chaldean admired. Oh, for a grand character to support one’s religious determination!

Then observe that *the protest must be courteously borne*. While Daniel was very decided, he was very courteous in his protests. He went to the prince and he told him his scruples. He requested that he might not be obliged to defile himself. There are many ways of doing the same thing and some people always select the very ugliest way of doing everything. Let us ask for wisdom and discretion in doing that which is right. Firmness of purpose should be adorned with gentleness of manner in carrying it out. It was so with young Daniel.

Next to that, *self-denial must be sought*. I do not think that Daniel had any objection to eat flesh, or to drink wine, for he evidently did both, according to other portions of this Book, but his objection was, for religious reasons, against the king’s meat and the king’s wine, so he said, “To make it clear that nothing that enters my lips has ever been dedicated to idols, let me have nothing to eat but pulse—lentils, beans, peas, and such like things—and for drink, let me have that of which kings do not often take much, let me have nothing but water, in order to make quite sure that I have no libation that has been offered to idols.”

So Daniel and his three companions denied themselves luxuries, which, perhaps, they enjoyed as much as anybody else, so as by no means to defile themselves with anything which had been associated with the Babylonian idols. If you will be out and out for God, you must expect self-denial and you will have to habituate yourself to it.

Be ready for a bad name, be willing to be called a bigot, be prepared for loss of friendships, be prepared for anything so long as you can stand fast by Him who bought you with His precious blood. He that should run the gauntlet of earth and hell for a thousand years, and yet hold fast his integrity, would be a gainer by all that he lost—he would gain an increase of eternal joy by all he suffered. Wherefore I charge you, seek for the Daniel spirit.

And then *the test must be boldly put*. Daniel showed his faith when he said to Melzar, “Feed me and my three companions on this common fare; give us nothing else. We do not ask you to leave us to our

plan for twelve months; try us for a short time. I do not say a day or two; but take as many days as you like. Put us to the test and if, at the end of the appointed time, we are not all the better for our plain fare, then we will consider further, but for the present, will you try us?”

I think that a Christian man should be willing to be tried. He should be pleased to let his religion be put to the test. “There,” he says, “hammer away if you like.” Do you need to be carried to heaven on a feather bed? Do you want always to be protected from everybody’s sneer and frown—and to go to heaven as if you were riding in the procession on Lord Mayor’s day? Well, if so, you are very much mistaken if you think you are going to have it so. God give you courage, more and more of it, through faith in Himself! May you be willing to put your religion to every proper test, the test of life, and the test of death, too!

III. Now, in closing, I want to show you that THERE ARE CERTAIN POINTS WHICH WILL HAVE TO BE PROVED BY EXPERIENCE.

I speak, now, to you Christian people who hold fast by the old doctrines of the Gospel, who mean to hold fast by the old ways and will not be led astray by modern temptations. Now what have you to prove?

Well, I think that you have to prove that *the old faith gives you a bright and cheerful spirit*. Really, I cannot help laughing sometimes when I see myself as some other people see me. One gentleman describes me as having “settled down into an ever-deepening gloom.” It is a curious thing that I was not aware of this at all.

You who know me and with whom I mix—have you noticed this “ever-deepening gloom” falling upon me? Do I preach like a man who has lost all the joy of life and all his comfort? I think not. If there is a happier man beneath the skies than I am, I will not change places with him, for I am perfectly satisfied to take things as they come to me—and I am glad that he has more to rejoice in than I have.

Yet I am sure I do not know what he has that I have not. I have God in heaven, I have God on earth, my heart is filled with an intense satisfaction in the firm conviction that what I believe is true and that what I preach to you is true. I am ready to stand before the judgment seat to give an account of what I have preached.

That which I have asked you to believe, I myself believe, and if I am lost with faith in Christ, and you are lost, well, we will both be lost and go down in the same ship, for I have not a little private boat on the davits, ready to be let down, that I may get away by myself. I shall stick to the old ship and be the last man to leave it—and I shall not leave it—neither will the ship go down, but it will carry us all safely to the desired haven.

Well, dear friends, if you hold by this truth, do not let that ever make you gloomy. Men talk of “Gloomy Calvinism!” Have you never read about that “awful gloomy Calvinism”? Think of Calvin, a man who suffered from somewhere about eighty-three separate diseases—the most pained and tortured of all men as to his body—yet look at his life and read his Commentaries and his other books, and see the deep and wondrous calm that filled his mighty soul.

There was nothing gloomy about his Calvinism—it was all bright and light and cheering to him. They do not know us or they would not attack us as they do. Perhaps they would though, for the enemies of the truth are ever ready to lie in their throats.

Another point that we shall have to prove, dear friends, *is that the old faith promotes holiness of life*. There are some who say, “Those people cry down good works.” Do we? If you bring them as a price to purchase salvation, we do cry them down. “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” and as somebody says, “The rags have the best of it, for they are worth more than our righteousnesses.”

We do say that, but though we cry down good works as a ground of confidence, we wish to abound in them more and more to the glory of God. Go to some people and hear them talk about good works, and go to other people and see them done. We wish for you and for ourselves, that we may be so holy in our lives, so gracious in our conversation that even our adversaries shall be compelled to say, “Whatever their doctrines may be, their lives are right.” We have to prove that we are fatter and fairer than those

who eat the king’s meat. God help us to prove that we are more truthful and more godly than those who have not like precious faith!

The next thing, dear friends, is that we must prove that *the old faith produces much love of our fellow men*. You know that, nowadays, the watchword is “the enthusiasm of humanity.” It is a curious thing that those churches that have such a wonderful “enthusiasm of humanity” speak of us as if we were always talking of God and forgetting men.

Well, well, which of these new-fangled churches has an orphanage? It is very fine to talk about Christian socialism and what you are going to do for the poor—but what have you done? Much of it is just chatter, chatter, and nothing else. But the godly, who feel that God is all, are, after all, those who care most for men.

And those who believe most firmly that the unbelieving sinner will be lost are the men who are most anxious to have him saved. Those who believe that there is no salvation but by the precious blood are determined that Christ shall see of the travail of His soul. Those who believe that salvation is all of grace from first to last are moved to preach it with heart and soul wherever they have the opportunity.

And when God makes up His last account, it shall be found, I trust, that the best lovers of men have been those who were first of all the best lovers of God. By your help, by your kindness, by your benevolence, prove it, so that, when they come to look at you who have eaten nothing but pulse, and who have drunk water, they may find that after all you appear fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children who ate the portion of the king’s meat and drank his wine. Let our labor for the conversion of souls be incessant. Let us abound and superabound in it.

And then, dear friends, let us prove that *the old faith enables us to have great patience in trial*. He who believes the doctrines of grace is the man who can suffer. He who falls back on predestination and the sovereignty of God is the man to bear burdens that would crush another. And when we come to die, who will die best?

Will it be the man who is trusting in his own righteousness, or trusting in constantly changing philosophy that alters like a chameleon, according to the light that falls on it? Who will die best? You, with all this flimsy stuff, or he who, believing in his God, and in his Bible, falls back upon the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ?

Finally, brethren, what is wanted is that *we who hold the old faith should be in a better state of spiritual health*. May every grace be developed! May every faculty be consecrated! May your whole lives be spent in walking with God and may you be such men that, if we want evidences of the truth of our holy religion, we may bring you forward and say, “See what grace has made them. A belief in the doctrines of grace has fashioned them as they are, and the men themselves are the proof of what they believe.”

May God bless to many here the words which I have spoken so feebly—and may many a young man—

***“Dare to be a Daniel!
Dare to stand alone!
Dare to have a purpose firm!
Dare to make it known!”***

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

DANIEL I

Verse 1. *In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it.*

Sin always brings its punishment. King Jehoiakim did evil in the sight of the Lord, so God used Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, to be the rod in His hand to scourge His sinful people and their wicked king.

2. And the LORD gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand,

It was not merely that Nebuchadnezzar was strong enough to overcome the Jews, but God handed over His people into Nebuchadnezzar’s hand. The enemy cannot touch the church of God without divine permission.

2. With part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god.

See how holy things, once used for the noblest purposes, become of no further service when the Spirit of God is gone from the church. You know that when the Philistines captured the ark of God, and put it in the temple of Dagon, the fish-god fell down broken before the ark. Nothing of this kind happened in Babylon. The holy vessels were put into the heathen temple and no miraculous result followed, for God cares nothing for golden vessels in and of themselves. When sin has polluted His people, their precious things are nothing to Him. They may go where men please to carry them. All their value lies in God accepting the service rendered through them.

So, brothers, you may keep up your attendance at the Lord’s supper, and your preachings, and your gatherings for worship—but they will all be nothing without the Spirit of God. See how the Lord’s supper is turned into the sacrifice of the mass, and how baptism is represented as the channel or medium of regeneration, when once the Spirit of God has gone from the divinely-appointed ordinances.

Besides these holy vessels, Nebuchadnezzar took the best of the people of the land and carried them away captive. He singled out the rich and the noble—those who had education and other attainments—while he left the poorest of the land behind. Sometimes those who are the most exalted will have the most suffering.

3-4. And the king spake unto Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king’s seed, and of the princes; children—

Or youths,—

4. In whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skillful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king’s palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

Nebuchadnezzar was, in many respects, an enlightened ruler. He looked upon this as one of the best things that he could do for his court and vast empire, that he should pick out the best of the young men of every nation, who should bring their national knowledge with them, and then, being sprightly in body and nimble in mind, should be trained to become counselors, or advisers of the court, or be prepared to fill important offices as they became vacant.

5. And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king’s meat, and of the wine which he drank:

Treating them exceedingly well, thinking, perhaps, that the very food they ate might help to tone their minds for the work to which he had called them. He wished to make them into true Chaldeans, so he ordained that they must eat of the meat he ate and drink of the wine he drank.

5. So nourishing them three years,

Putting them to college, as it were, for three years,—

5-6. That at the end thereof they might stand before the king. Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah:

You know these men’s names, you will recognize them when you hear them in their altered form.

7. Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names:

This was to Chaldeanize them, to take away from them everything Jewish.

7. For he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abed-nego.

Now these young men’s Jewish names had, each one of them, the name of God wrought into their texture. I need not stay to bring it out, but there is a signification about each name connecting it with God. You hear in two of them the sound of El, which is a name of God, and in the other two, the termination Iah, which brings out the name JEHOVAH. The new names that were given to them appear to have been connected with idols—at all events, it was so with Belteshazzar and Abednego, or Abednebo. The intent was to make Babylonians of them.

8. *But Daniel purposed in his heart—*

I always like to come across a “but” when there is any scheme of this kind. When the plan is to seduce men from right, then it is a happy thing to have a but, but, but, “But Daniel purposed in his heart,” determined, settled, fixed it,—

8. *That he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank.*

Daniel here mentions only himself, but the three others were one with him in the resolve and the request. He was the leader. Sometimes there would be no Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, if there was not a Daniel. The other three might never have had the strength of mind, if it had not been for the Daniel who dared to stand alone. But having such a brave leader, they dared to stand with him. We often owe much to spiritually-minded men who are able to help others to take a right course.

8-9. *Therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.*

It was like the case of Joseph and Potiphar. Daniel’s gentle disposition, his loving ways, his open and frank spirit, had won upon the prince of the eunuchs, so that he not only regarded him with favor, but even had a tender love for him. God has the hearts of all men under His control and He may give His people favor where they least expect it.

10. *And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king.*

What a reign of terror there is in a despotic country, where kings can do as they will! For the smallest offense, a man’s head may be in danger.

11-12. *Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.*

I like it that the Holy Ghost uses their old names whenever it is proper that they should be used. May we never lose our old names! I mean, our new names, for they have grown old with some of us now. May we always be known as the servants of God and not as Chaldeans!

The prince of the eunuchs gave Daniel a kind of hint, that, if the officer under him chose to take the responsibility of altering the food and drink, he might do so, and the prince would not interfere with the experiment. So Daniel turns to Melzar and says to him, “Prove thy servants for a suitable time. Let us have pulse to eat, and water to drink.” He put his request in an extreme light, in order to be quite sure that nothing brought to him would come from the king’s table.

13. *Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king’s meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.*

“If we do fall off and grow thin, and look pale and ill through this coarse food, as you think it, well then, alter it. But if, on the other hand, we should be as well as those who have eaten the king’s meat, and drunk the king’s wine, then let us keep to our pulse and water.”

14. *So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.*

A round number, standing for a sufficient period to afford a fair test.

15. *And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king’s meat.*

I doubt not that the satisfaction of heart which they had in keeping themselves undefiled tended to give them a good digestion and thus they were more likely to be well than were the others.

16-17. *Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse. As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom:*

God can help us in our study. We may pray as much over what we have to learn as over what we have to do. I believe that, often, a difficult problem can be best solved by prayer. All true knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom are the gifts of God.

17-19. *And Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king.*

They were made to be his attendants, his advisers—these very men who had been so absurd as not to eat the food from the royal table—so obstinate as to consider that they would defile themselves if they did. It is these absurd and obstinate people who cannot be bent, but must be straight—the upright men who shall stand before kings—for God is with them.

20. *And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.*

They communed with God and that was better than being magicians or stargazers. Men of God are ten times better than all that lot put together.

21. *And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.*

Those two words summarize the whole of Daniel’s history—“Daniel continued.” May God give to each of us here grace to continue as Daniel did!

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.