

# “DEVOTED TO THE END”

## Daniel 1

Pastor Keith E. Gephart

### INTRODUCTION

It is a long way from here to where you are going—esp. for you teens and children.

*Stay true to the Lord and stand strong in Him!*

**Satan is in no hurry to get you—but he will try to get you before you get to the end of your life.**

ONLY ONE OUT OF TEN WHO AT AGE 21 HAVE COMMITTED TO SERVE GOD ARE STILL ON TRACK AT AGE 65.

- Moral Failures
- Discouragement
- Liberal Theology or other forms of Compromise
- Materialism and Money
- Apathy

**9 out of 10 drop out!**

**ILLUSTRATION: Preacher who kept a record in the back of his Bible of 24 young men his age who were committed to serve God; he crossed a name out each time one dropped out for whatever reason. 33 years later ONLY 3 NAMES WERE LEFT!**

IT IS NOT HOW YOU START THAT MATTERS; IT IS HOW YOU FINISH.

Today I want to speak with you about one of the best examples in the Bible of a young man who **both started well and finished well: Daniel.**

**ILLUSTRATION:** “Daniel prayed to God each day and always did his best, but wicked men who hated God put Daniel to the test. Daniel, Daniel, Daniel took his stand; I would be like Daniel and follow God’s command.

WHAT 4 INSIGHTS DO WE GAIN FROM THIS PASSAGE THAT MUST DIRECT OUR LIFE FOCUS?

- I. CHILDHOOD DEVOTION (1:1-7)
  - A. Captivity of the youths of Judah (1-2)
    - Captor—King Nebuchadnezzar
    - Captive—King Jehoiakim—17<sup>th</sup> king of Judah; oldest son of Josiah; Jehoahaz preceded him—dethroned by Necho of Egypt
    - Chronology—Third year of Jehoiakim’s reign (Cf. Jeremiah’s 4<sup>th</sup> year (46:2—accession vs. non-accession year system.
    - Surrendered: by Lord (Adonai—their Master & true Lord) along with sacred vessels of His house! **Because of their sin!**
    - Also surrendered some of “the sons of Israel”—including some of the “royal family” and nobles. [More of both vessels and people taken later—II K. 24:13ff.]

- Situation—land of Shinar (cf. Gen. 10 & 11) =Babylon; this name show the place to be **hostile to the faith**.
- God’s vessels put into the house of his god(s)—into the treasury. **This was a place of idolatry—of false gods**. Babylon had more than 50 temples devoted to their gods; Marduk was the chief one.
- **It looked as though Yahweh had lost in this battle between the gods of the nations! MARDUK MUST BE STRONGER!**

What severely difficult and trying circumstances for the faith and devotion of Daniel.

HOW IMPORTANT HIS CONVICTION AND DEVOTION WOULD BE!

B. Capability of the Youths (3-4) [They were 14 or 15 years of age!]

REASONS TAKEN HOSTAGE:

- Keeps royal family in check.
- Reminds them of their conquest.
- Later these men will assist in the administration of Jewish Affairs.
- The intent is to **change their loyalty and devotion** from Israel to Babylon, and from their deity to those of Babylon.

1. Their Noble Background: Royal and Noble youths from the theocratic nation (3)

2. Physical qualities: **“no defects,” “good looking”**

3. Intellectual Qualities:

- Intelligence in *every branch* of wisdom
- Well informed: “knowers of knowledge”
- Powers of comprehension: “understanders of knowledge”
- Taught the **literature** and **language** of the Chaldeans—i.e. the Babylonians and/or the scholar priests.

**MUCH OF THIS WAS IDOLATROUS, SUPERSTITIOUS, PERVERTED!!** [cuneiform writings]

4. Social Qualities: *Able to stand in the palace of the king.*

C. Conditioning of the Youths (5-7)

1. Nutrition (5a)—Daily portion from the king’s own food and wine—food “fit for a king”.

What an honor! Problem: Unclean Foods; Improperly prepared; Offered to Idols.

- **Do we fail to see problems today because of a lack of spiritual insight?**
- **This was a conditioning away from loyalty to their own God!**

2. Education (5b)

- This was not all negative—they were “made great” for a three year period.
- Then if successful they would “stand before the king”—enter his service.
- Again, what a privilege; **many would “kill” for such a privilege**.
- Isaiah 39:7 had predicted this—to Hezekiah when he had shown all to Babylon.

3. Values and Philosophy

**ALL EDUCATION INVOLVES PHILOSOPHY AND VALUES. BEWARE—SATAN IS SUBTLE!**

4. Name Changes (From Hebrew to Chaldean names : Accommodate to their Ways!)

1. Daniel: “God is my Judge” → Belteshazzar: “Bel protect the king”
2. Hananiah: “Yahweh is Gracious” → Shadrach: “Command of Aku” — moon god
3. Mishael: “Who is what God is?” → Meshach: “Who is what Aku is?”
4. Azariah: “Yahweh has helped” → Abednego: “Servant of Nebo”

**So here were these young men: captive, far from home, being conditioned away from everything they knew and believed. How would they respond? How would Daniel respond?**

## II. COMPLETE DEVOTION (8-13)

### A. His Inner Conviction (8a)—“Placed upon his heart”

- **He made a decision and then obligated himself!**
- Not to defile himself with the king’s food or wine: Unclean and idolatry.
- They wanted to maintain their distinctiveness and their heritage.

#### DIFFICULTIES OF THIS DECISION

1. The King had ordered this diet—they were taught to be “law-abiding” and to obey authority. **Be creative in obeying God rather than men!**
2. Disobedience could (and would) bring **punishment** (see v. 10).
3. Disobedience could spoil their chances of advancement—“getting ahead”—and being appointed to a government post.
4. The Food was of very good quality—in fact **it was the best food available anywhere**. [Especially compared with vegetables and water!]
5. They were a long way from home; no one would know the difference.
6. God had not kept them from captivity—why obey His commands?
7. Daniel’s first attempt failed—“Oh well, I tried.”
8. They would probably be ridiculed by others—**Peer Pressure**.

THIS WAS SO DIFFICULT THAT ALL BUT **FOUR** HEBREW YOUTHS GAVE IN. And, we never hear from any of them again, either!

**ILLUSTRATION:** Students at SIBBC—esp. young girl: a convert from Islam.

### B. His Outer Conduct (8b-13)

1. Consultation with his Commander: that he might not defile himself (8b-10)
  - a. Compassion and favor [chesed] for Daniel (9)—**God granted it—for He did right!** Such was also earned by Daniel because of his character, conviction, respect, and godliness.
  - b. Consternation for commander about the king—possible capital punishment. (10)
2. Consultation with the Overseer (11-13) [The “melzar”—a position, not a name.]
  - A 10 day testing: Notice Daniel’s **faith**—difference would be noticeable that soon! [It is possible that Daniel had a revelation from the Lord.]
  - Give us vegetables (“what grows from seed”) and water (12).
  - Then comparison made between us and the other youths on the king’s diet—in “your presence”—you observe (13).
  - Then you deal with us according to what you see (13b).

NOTICE THE PROPER METHOD OF DEALING WITH AUTHORITY [*our superiors*] WHEN WE HAVE A PROBLEM:

1. Go to the proper authority.
2. Be respectful (Daniel “requested”).
3. Explain your position: “might not defile.”
4. Be sincere.
5. Be persistent.
6. Provide Creative alternatives (12-13): *Recognize the superior’s problem; See it from his viewpoint; make a sensible and understandable proposal.*
7. Work hard to get the best results—and do not prove to be ungrateful.

**They were the best students and workers; what kind are you?**

It is evident here that these young men were completely devoted to the Lord; but what would the consequences be of such devotion?

### III. THE CONSEQUENCE OF DEVOTION (14-20)

- A. Physical Health (14-16)—they were better of face (appearance) and form (fatter in flesh) than all the youth eating the king’s diet (15)—**this is phenomenal in just 10 days**. Thus they are kept on their diet (16).
- B. Mental Prowess—knowledge and insight “in every branch of literature and wisdom”(17a)
  - Notice that God gave this to them: the capacity, desire, and success.
  - They had to study and work hard.
  - Don’t think that the subject material would be all conducive to godliness and the word of God.
  - Included would be the insight to distinguish between heathen lore and godly truth.
  - They could determine what was actually true—God gave them penetrating insight.
- C. Spiritual Insight: Daniel “understood all kinds of visions and dreams.” (17b)
  - There was much such training in the Babylonian system.
  - God gave him help in true spiritual matters: “every”—Daniel could distinguish between false and true; and he could understand real heaven-sent dreams.
- D. Promotion to the King’s Service (18-19)
  1. The candidates presented at the end of the training period (18).
  2. The king questioned them—none were found to be better than the four Hebrew men: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; note the use of Hebrew names! (19)
  3. They entered the king’s service.
- E. Successful Employment (20)
  1. Consulted in many matters of “wisdom” and “understanding”
  2. They were **10 times better** than all the kings “magicians” and “sorcerers who were in **all** his realm.” [Literally they were “the equal of 10 hands”—i.e. ten persons.]

**IT PAYS TO DO RIGHT. OF WHAT VALUE WERE ALL OF THE COMPROMISERS?**

Yes, complete devotion has divinely blessed consequences. **But this all happened while they were teenagers. HOW LONG DI THIS DEVOTION LAST?**

IV. CONTINUAL DEVOTION (21: “And Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus the king.”)  
So what? What is the point here?

**DANIEL NEVER QUIT. DANIEL STAYED FAITHFUL UNTIL THE END OF HIS LIFE.**

- **Despite Plots and Intrigues**
- **Jealousy and Envy against foreigners**
- **Through 4 successions of Babylonian kings**
- **Through 2 assassinations of kings**
- **Through the fall of the Babylonian Empire**
- **During the rise of the Persian empire**
- **Until 539 BC—66 years later**
- **And continued at least until the lions’ den incident**

#### CONCLUSION

So then, WHAT 4 INSIGHTS DID WE GAIN FROM THIS PASSAGE THAT MUST DIRECT OUR LIFE FOCUS

- 1) Daniel had Childhood Devotion.
- 2) Daniel had Complete Devotion.
- 3) Daniel saw Positive Consequences of his Devotion.
- 4) Daniel had Continual Devotion

**Daniel both started well and finished well.**

IT IS NOT HOW YOU START THAT MATTERS; IT IS HOW YOU FINISH.

Oh how we need Young People to be completely devoted to God from childhood and through adulthood!  
Oh how we need adults who will dedicate the rest of their lives in devotion to Christ.

**We need more like Daniel. Will you accept the challenge?  
Will you take your stand for God today?**

**If so, stand up right where you are.**

**Those standing, please come to the front for a prayer of dedication.**