

Dare to Be a Daniel

by C.H. Spurgeon

The sermon emphasizes the importance of making decisions and staying true to one's convictions, even in the face of temptation and opposition.

Duration: 36:49

Scripture: Daniel 1:8-17, 1 Corinthians 10:14, 1 Corinthians 10:21, 2 Corinthians 6:17-18

Topics: "Faith And Trust", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of having faith in God and relying on the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ for salvation. He encourages believers to strive for spiritual health and to develop every grace and consecrate every faculty of their lives to walking with God. The preacher also highlights the example of Daniel, who demonstrated his faith by trusting in God's provision and standing firm in his beliefs. He warns against compromising one's faith and succumbing to worldly temptations, urging Christians to remain steadfast and true to their beliefs.

Transcript

The Metropolitan Tabernacle pulpit, Dare to be a Daniel, a sermon intended for reading on Lord's Day, January 15th, 1893, delivered by C. H. Spurgeon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington. Daniel 1, verse 8. 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. 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 quite 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, and 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. 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 in 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 the 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 afterlife 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 continued 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 of temptation 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.

There are temptations to be resisted. There never was a man yet who had faith and did not have 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 built, 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 bidden 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. 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.

And more than that, usually such a king as Nebuchadnezzar, before he ate food, dedicated it to his god. Bel-meredok was greatly venerated by Nebuchadnezzar as god, so that a libation of wine was poured out to Meredok, 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 everyone else? There is no use in being so strict and sticking 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 men. 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 bulk 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 what 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 someone 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 and 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 helped you to be so. But now it comes to Christian people in another way. Some people 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 until, as one of our friends said most truly in prayer tonight, they have brought the theatre into the house of God. They have really done so and brought back chaos and all night premeable 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 man 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 in 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 the 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. The temptation to general 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 loved 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 ye 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 knoweth not. We have our recreation, 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 tendeth towards departure from the living God, we say that by His grace we determine not to defile ourselves therewith.

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 winning. 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 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 if 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 born. 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 much 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 Malzahar, 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, says he, hammer away if you like.

Do you want 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 arriving in the procession on Lord Mayer's day? Well, if so, you are very mistaken if you think you are going to have it so. God gives 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.

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 and who mean to hold fast by the old ways and who 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, you have 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 trow 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 belt 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 we wish for ourselves, that we may be so holy in our lives, so gracious in our conversation, that even our adversary 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 liked 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? There is a very fine 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 the travail of his soul. Those who believe that salvation is all of grace from first to last are moved to preach

it with their heart and soul whenever 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 we can 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.

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