

Paul H. Dixon: Daniel was a man of principle. And to establish that I would like for us to begin with Daniel 1, and read a few verses. Beginning with the first verse.

"In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon unto Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah into his hand 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. 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 in whom was no blemish but well favored, and skillful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning in the tongue of the Chaldeans. And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank, so nourishing them three years 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, under whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names. For he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar, and to Hananiah, of Shadrach, and to Mishael, of Meshach, and to Azariah, of Abednego. But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor of the wine which he drank. Therefore, he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. And since God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs," you know what follows, and the gentleman is willing to abide for a period of time with Daniel's convictions and just see how it would work out though he certainly was very dubious that it would materialize. And then we know of course how that Daniel and his friends with this stand, excelled all the others and went on to great places of leadership in the kingdom, and great influence for the cause of Christ.

Now there are many things that might be said of young people. Obviously around here we have a great heart for young men and for young women. I do not know what your goal is as to what could be said of you. But I would like to think that you would covet, that someday along the way it could be said of you as it was said of Daniel, that you had determined that you would not be defiled. That's what Daniel said. He purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself.

I readily admit that Daniel certainly had a defiled nature just as we do because Daniel was a sinner. But how many young people today have such purpose in their lives? I'm sure that all of us are exposed to many, many young people in our hometowns, and those who come across our paths, and those we read about in the newspapers and just society as a whole. And those who are on college campuses and high school campuses, those who've graduated. I think we would have to say that there are few who have determined to not be defiled and to be untainted by sin.

Today in fact, one is thought to be big if he can boast of his impurity. The idea is to sow your wild oats while you're young. That's the time in life to just have a big time and do your own thing. Years ago, Mr. Ruskin said, "People often say we excuse the thoughtlessness of youth." My reply, "Never." 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. There is no period which so much demands or so much necessitates thoughtfulness as our early days. I like that. I would have to disagree with it to a degree though. Mr. Ruskin is willing to excuse those who would be thoughtless in their old age. I will not be. Pardon me, faculty, staff, administration.

I realize that many of you do not quite fit this, but for the sake of time, for those of us who are in old age, there is no excuse. Too often on the horizon of the cause of Christ are we having those in positions of leadership, or are falling on their faces, and falling into sin, and dishonoring the name of Christ, and bringing disgrace to His cause. And may I ask, what kind of an impact does this have upon the youth? What does this say to the boys and girls who come across our paths? And to those young people in those churches, and yes to those young people who've gone through the halls of Cedarville College, if somewhere along the way, faculty member, staff member, administrator, we stumble, we fall whether we be 30 or 40 or 50 or 60 or 70 or 80? And just as we would challenge the young people not to defile themselves, the challenge must be for us as well to finish the course and to finish it in purity.

But coming back to our young people, I like what Mr. Spurgeon said. He said, "The time for thought is in the beginning of life. If ever there was any time for the farmer to think it is in the early stages of the plowing and the sowing. If he does not think, then it will be of little use later." 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. Oh, yes. I recognize that it is not easy to live a life that is undefiled, but I think there are some things that we can learn from Daniel. First of all, I would like for us to consider the temptation.

I. The temptation and the first point under this is that Daniel was in a strange land. In a general way may I suggest that so are we. Yes, Daniel had been taken captivity and we can identify with this by thinking perhaps of the Russians coming into the United States, capturing this nation and handpicking a few of you to go back to Moscow, to be trained in their culture and in their language so that they could make leaders out of you with your own people. That's what happened to Daniel when he was yet a teenager. But as I said, we are all in a strange land. We sing the song, "This world is not my home. I'm just a passing through. My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue."

And while citizenship is in heaven, so we are all in a strange land as children of God. But I would like to point out to you that the temptation of being in a strange land for Daniel was that he was separated from his parents, separated

from the king who had impacted him, separated from the prophet, Jeremiah and the preachers who had come into his life. And that we talked about in weeks gone by, maybe some of his closest friends who had disciplesd him, built into his life, some of his older friends. There he is.

I am aware that some of you leaving your parents and coming to Cedarville College, it has been a strange land for you. Because you have found that within a Christian college there are temptations. It's amazing to me how that generally speaking, most young people like water seek their own level. And many of you came to this campus and instead of trying to find a godly young person who had evidenced growth in his Christian walk, you found some who had some of the very same problems you do.

And you found great comfort that here was another young person who perhaps did not even want to be here just like you, but because of the pressure of parents, came. Or you found someone who also had an unsaved boyfriend or an unsaved girlfriend and there was much you could talk about. You found someone else who really was not dedicated to the Lord and liked to live out there on the fringes, and you came to this strange land and faced the temptation. Of course, all of us when we travel, we go into strange lands, we go into cities where no one knows us. We stay in motels where no one knows us. When you go into business, you walk into an office and they do not know necessarily that you are a Christian, and you can keep that a secret if you want to. Many go into the armed services. Wherever we go, it seems we can always find that we are separated from other Christians and now it is our decision, it is our life, it is our testimony.

But here was a young man in Babylon who would not do what the Babylonians did, youth and the king's court who would not eat what the king ate, what the king would drink, and God blessed him. Yes, Daniel was in a strange land. That was part of the temptation.

Number two, the temptation was great. Please do not underestimate this temptation. He could have fared like a prince. The king was eating pork, and rabbit, and certain kinds of fish. And I personally like meat. I am not a vegetarian. I cannot imagine someone existing on the kind of a diet that Daniel was pleading for and necessarily enjoying it. I don't care what you add to it, it just wouldn't taste very good. Day after day to see all of your friends indulging in these delicacies, prepared exceptionally well. And then on top of that, the king would be drinking the best of the wines, the most expensive wines. And of course all of this was against the Mosaic law. Temptation was great.

Something that has come to my attention in recent weeks is that our churches are being bombarded with the temptation to social drinking. I'm amazed as I have watched over the years the shifting tide within fundamental and evangelical Christianity. And even as Quebedeaux wrote in the book on The Worldly Evangelicals, the evangelical left has now come to the place where they

are defending social drinking. And then this carries over into our own churches. I have had pastors in recent days say to me, "Paul, it is unbelievable the number of our people in our churches who are excusing the social drink." You live in that day.

You are faced with that temptation as well as all of the immorality that constantly confronts us. Obviously everyone knows what our position is on alcohol here at Cedarville College and our opposition to it, and the historic position of fundamental Christianity and evangelical Christianity. But I recently, I've read a number of things and bated some passages around in my mind as to what the Bible teaches about total abstinence and so forth. I recently listened to three tapes that stimulated my thinking and helped me about as much as anything I've listened to. I thought you might like to listen to them, so I'm going to give you the names of the tapes if you'd like to write them down and the preacher and tell you where you can get them.

John MacArthur, of course, is an exceptional preacher. Many of you listen to him, a real Bible teacher. John MacArthur sent me three tapes. He called me one day and said, "Paul, I want you to listen to these." And then sent me the tapes on Ephesians 5:18. "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." And as only John can do, it takes him three sermons just to deal with the part, "Be not drunk with wine." And the three hours on what he believes is the biblical perspective of drinking of alcohol, social drinking. If you would like to get the tapes, there are two ways to get them. Number one, if you would like to buy them, I believe I'm correct in this, I think you can buy them for about a dollar and a half a piece.

All you have to do is write to, Word of Grace Communications, Post Office Box 4000, Panorama City, California. Give it to you again, Word of Grace Communication, Post Office Box 4000, Panorama City, California 91412.

There's another way, if you do not have this catalog of cassette tapes, you ought to order it. There is a Bible Believers Cassettes Inc in Springdale, Arkansas that will loan you tapes at no cost. You can write to them, borrow the tapes, listen to the tapes, copy them if you want to, send the tapes back to them, no charge.

That is, Bible Believers Cassettes, 130 North Spring Street, Springdale, Arkansas 72764. Again, Bible Believers Cassettes, 130 North Spring Street, Springdale, Arkansas 72764. And ask them for a copy of their catalog. They have almost all of John MacArthur's tapes, Chuck Swindoll's tapes, most of the great Bible teachers in the country today, they have literally hundreds and thousands of tapes that you can borrow.

But Daniel was placed into a situation in a strange land where the temptation was great, and so are we.

Daniel also number three, under temptation, face, what appeared to be the road to honor. If he would get along, he must do what he is told. The understanding is no one with principles can get to the top. Be careful lest your religion stand in the way. One of our graduates shared with me in recent days that working in a secular situation, he was appalled at the violation of the law, and some other things that were happening that he felt that he just could not tolerate. So he began doing some investigating and some confrontation, and was called in on the carpet by a supervisor. His supervisor said, "Look, don't get involved. Leave your religion at home when you come to work. I know you go to church, I know where you went to school, but you can't apply that to this situation." This graduate of ours was willing to take a stand and say, "That's my life. That's not something that you put in a compartment." And he took his stand for Christ.

Now, I do not know what that is going to mean. He has worked for a number of years at that place. It could cost him his job, it could cost him a job that gives him considerable salary. It could mean that because of that stand like Daniel's stand someday when they are looking for a supervisor with integrity, they will look to him. I think we could relate account after account, illustration after illustration of Christians who've taken a firm stand that's been recognized and they've been elevated like Daniel. But I would not want to motivate you by saying, do it because it's right and if you do what's right, you'll go to the top. If you read Hebrews 11, there are many, many people who did what was right, and lost their jobs and lost their lives.

No, I would motivate you to do it and take your stand, and be a person of principle, and have a spirit of determination because it is biblical, it is godly and it is right. The temptation.

II. Well, how did Daniel have victory over temptation?

Number one, I believe that Daniel had victory over temptation because Daniel knew his God, he knew him well. He had a relation with his God, a relationship. I remember being out with the Chinese in California. Mrs. Dixon and I have gone out there on occasion to minister to them. We love the Chinese. And there is very little immorality among the Chinese. In asking these young people why it is that they seemingly do not yield to the temptation like so many of us, the answer was, "We just could not bring ourselves to disgrace and dishonor our parents." The relationship that we have to our parents, it's so great that we just could not do that to them. It's good motivation for all of us. But how much greater is the motivation because of the relationship to my God? Was that not what happened to Joseph when he was faced with the temptation? He said, "How can I sin against my God?"

I remember a young lady who wants related to me how she was propositioned by a man. And this young lady was married. He said, "Why don't you take a trip with me? Your husband is gone. No one will know." Her response was that that

temptation, God will, and He will. And victory over temptation came to Daniel and comes to us because we know God. Victory also came to Daniel because Daniel did not look to others to arrive at his conviction.

You know and I know that peer pressure is great. One of the things that I thoroughly disagree with though is that you as young people, that that is something you are facing and that we do not, don't let us as adults kid you. Peer pressure is always there. If you don't believe that, go to a pastor's meeting. And at that pastor's meeting you'll see peer pressure. If you don't believe that, go to one of our faculty meetings. And you'll see peer pressure at work. If you don't believe that, go to one of the retirement homes and they're still living under peer pressure. But when you are a young person I know that it is great as well.

There is always, "Well, what kind of a stand do my friends take, and how do they see this?" Somehow I sense that Daniel did not have a meeting with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and say, "Hey guys, will you stand with me?" Though there were probably scores and hundreds of young people who were turning their back on God and His word and not taking a stand on this day. Daniel wasn't influenced by that. Though the majority, though the masses were saying, "Hey, we have to compromise." Daniel stood up and said, "No, thanks." You're going to have to become your own man, your own woman. You're going to have to get some convictions and some principles individually and say, "I will take the stand even if no other Christian takes the stand. This is my conviction and this is where I stand."

Number three, Daniel was able to have victory over the temptation because Daniel early established his principles. Do you think that Daniel on the spot made up his mind and said, "It is now that I am determined to not be defied," when confronted with the temptation? Oh no, it just doesn't work that way. It is early, long before we face the temptation that we decide whose side we're on, that we determine where we are going, that we set our priorities. Young people what I want to challenge you to do is today, if never before, nail those colors to the mast. Establish those principles. Even if you've been running with the group that's been on the fringe, even if you've been with a mediocre, lukewarm crowd, say, "No longer, I want to be like Daniel."

In conclusion, I would like to just relate to you some points that I wish I had another day to preach another sermon on, and that is that with your principles and with your convictions, keep an excellent, sweet, reasonable, Christlike spirit. Now, this is very difficult to attain. Generally when we establish convictions and feel them very strongly, there is the temptation to take everybody else down with us, and begin to become very judgmental, and very critical of those who do not share convictions, especially in those gray areas where the Word of God is not plain. We are definitely young people not to be conformed to this world as Christians. On the other hand, we are to be conformed to our Lord.

It is this conformity to our Lord that ought to make us unconformed to the world. You see, if Satan cannot make world conformists of us, he will make us so busy with non-conformity that we become only Pharisees separated from sinners, but take on a sinful attitude that also dishonors our Lord. Let's have our minds made up, our convictions settled. But at the same time, let us not be so unkind, so ungenerous, so unlovable that we lose our testimony. By all 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, and I do not find God using people like that. May He give us a godly character to uphold our godly convictions and determination. This is what Daniel had and what we need to have.

I brought along a book that I would like to recommend to you. It will stimulate your thinking. My only problem is I did not warn the bookstore, and so first come first served. I'd like to challenge you to read it over the Christmas break. You say, read over the Christmas break. I'll have it enough reading by next week to hold me till next quarter. Decision Making and the Will of God: A Biblical Alternative to the Traditional View by Garry Friesen with J. Robin Maxson. It will stimulate your thinking. It is stimulating mine at the present. I'm working through it.

But you will find two chapters at the end of the book that deal with some of the things we're talking about now, such as wisdom when Christians differ. How do we handle it when we have a strong conviction about the slack issue and someone else does not have a strong conviction about the slacks? Or you feel very strongly that all those people down south who think it's just taboo to wear slacks and yet we allow it, that somehow they are wrong and we are right. How do you handle that? Is an excellent chapter on that. And another excellent chapter on weaker brothers, Pharisees and servants. I would challenge you to read the book, if nothing else. I am sure that it will stimulate you relative to the matter of how to find God's will for your life, decision-making and the will of God...