

News & Notes

Sunday, July 19, 2009

Remember in Prayer: Arland Anderson; Robbie Alberson; Dot Ketchum; Billy Liming; John and Deliah Mann; Maria Mayes; Ann Ray; Pete Samples; Katherine Shaw; Ruby Tapp; Calvin Ursery; Alvie Williford;

Pantry item for the month of July is Sugar.

There are **order forms** in the foyer if you would like audio CDs of the gospel meeting with Allen Webster.

Ashland Events: Today: Prayer meeting at 4:00 PM; Youth activities following evening service;

Area Events: Beginning today: Gospel meeting at the Potts Camp congregation; Vacation Bible School at the Chapman congregation; July 26-29: Vacation Bible School at the New Albany congregation; July 26-30: POWER lectures at the Southaven congregation;

Sermon in Preview:

AM: Enoch – A Man who Walked with God
PM: Aaron – To Lead Israel

For the Record (July 12, 2009):

Attendance: 69 Contribution: \$1006.00 Budget: \$1459.00

The Ashland Church of Christ

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Sunday:

Bible Study 9:30 AM
Worship 10:30 AM
Worship 5:00 PM

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 PM

Shepherds:

Barney King
Jeff Roberson
Carrol Street

ASHLAND ANNOUNCER

"Note Those Who So Walk"

Philippians 3:17

2Thessalonians 3:14

DANIEL REFUSED TO DEFILE HIMSELF

Roger D. Campbell

In modern times it is not that uncommon for a young person to travel to or even live in a foreign country. Daniel, the prophet of God, and other Israelites of his generation lived in a foreign land – Babylon. However, they did not live there by choice. The Babylonians, under King Nebuchadnezzar, conquered Judah, destroyed the city of Jerusalem, and took a number of Jews into captivity in B.C. 586. Prior to that, on two previous occasions the Babylonians had carried other groups of Jews to Babylon.

Daniel was one of those in the first carrying away of Jewish captives, which took place in about B.C. 606. The king of Babylon had special plans for some of those Israelites whom he thought could benefit his kingdom. We read of this scenario in Daniel 1:3-5:

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 favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, 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. 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.

The next Bible verse records that Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were among those young Hebrew men whom the Babylonians handpicked. These four, as well as their peers, were to be trained under special circumstances. Daniel recognized, though, that the diet which the king had chosen for them was not going to work. *"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: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself"* (Daniel 1:8). To his credit, Daniel had enough knowledge of the ways of Jehovah to know that the food and drink ordered up by the king would defile him. Not only that, he also had the courage to refuse to do what he knew was wrong. Today we need men and women of God to be committed to doing

what is right and refusing to do what is wrong, regardless of what others think or say, and regardless of any fallout that might come about as a result of standing their guns and refusing to compromise.

When you think about it, if Daniel had wanted to go ahead and defile himself with the king's meat and drink, were there not a number of excuses that he could have tried to use to justify or defend his action? For instance, Daniel could have appealed to his **Age**. After all, he and his comrades were still young men. We do not know their exact ages, but many Bible students suggest that they were perhaps 15-20 years old at the time. Surely God does not expect a young person to be squeaky clean, does He? Know this much: the Lord cares enough about young people walking in a clean path that He said, "*Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word*" (Psalm 119:9). The fact that God told Timothy, "*Flee also youthful lusts*" (2 Timothy 2:22) indicates that He understands that young people can face strong temptations, but He also expects them (and all of His other children, too) to do the right thing. Yes, we need to be patient with young people, but we do them no favor by trying to justify their disobedience with words like, "Well, she is still so young. She'll grow out of it." If a person is old enough to be a Christian, then he/she is old enough to live a holy life, because that is God's requirement for His people of every age or stage in life.

Daniel also could have appealed to his **Location** as justification for defiling himself. Canaan was the holy land, and Jerusalem was the holy city, not Babylon. Daniel was in a heathen land, so what would it matter if he should just go along with the prescribed diet? What could it hurt? He was far, far away from the temple, so would not God's demand for holiness be lessened or even removed entirely? Daniel understood that God's standard of holiness did not change from place to place. It was just as important to be unspotted by sin in Babylon as it was in Judah. Today, regardless of where Christians are, they are to "*shine as lights in the world*" (Philippians 2:15). We deceive ourselves if we think it is wrong to sow to the flesh in our home area, but somehow when we leave our own city, county, state, or nation, then we can live in any manner we desire. Brethren, a man reaps whatever he sows wherever he sows it (Galatians 6:7-9).

Daniel could have appealed to his unique **Circumstances** and said, "Surely God will understand if I defile myself." Daniel and those with him were in an out-of-the-ordinary setup. They were captives, not free people. They were under orders to eat and drink certain things. The Babylonian prince of the eunuchs who was responsible for them said that if the Hebrew young men refused to eat and drink what the king told them to, it could cost him (the prince) his head. There was certainly pressure to conform, the situation was special (only select Hebrews were involved), and the stakes were high. Yet, the young messenger of God refused to defile himself. Thank God for having this example recorded for us in the Bible! (Romans 15:4). There may be times in our lives when we find ourselves in some unique circumstances, but our God still expects us to keep ourselves unspotted from the world (James 1:27), whatever the situation might be. No one is suggesting that it is easy to do. With the proper faith and conviction, though, we can remain faithful to the Lord despite any difficult surround-

ings (Philippians 4:13).

In Daniel's case, he also could have reasoned, "I do not feel comfortable doing this, but, look, it is only a temporary setup." It is true that the training for the young men was to last for only three years (Daniel 1:5). But, the **Temporary Nature** of a situation does not grant God's people the right to defile themselves. You and I must "*abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul*" (1 Peter 2:11). Stealing is not made acceptable just because it lasted for only five minutes. A weekend of gambling at the casino is not pleasing to God just because it lasted less than 48 hours. An adulterous relationship is not made pure simply because it went on for only a few weeks. Satan sometimes tempts us to jump into sin because, "Hey, later on you can always repent and ask God to forgive you." Engaging in a particular sin over a short period of time may not have all of the lasting consequences that a long-term transgression does, but folks, the wages of sin is still death (Romans 6:23). Choosing to dabble in sin, thinking to ourselves, "This will not last forever," is a foolish choice.

Another appeal which Daniel could have made was to the obvious **Danger** in which he would place himself if he refused to go along with the king's system. No doubt Daniel knew the potential danger of saying, "No, I am not eating and drinking that stuff." Seventy years later when Daniel prayed to Jehovah in spite of a different king's decree not to do so, he again was keenly aware that his life was at stake (Daniel 6). Daniel was a man that would rather lose his physical life and save his soul than compromise in order to stay alive and lose his soul in the process. Time and again we read in the Bible of great women and men of God who, despite threats to their physical wellbeing, made decisions to do those things that pleased the Lord. Thank God for their wonderful example. The apostles of Jesus were certainly in that number, as time and time again in the Book of Acts we read of them putting their lives on the line, being unwilling to compromise the truth in order to save their skin. Potential danger makes the heart pound, the palms sweat, the mouth go dry, the stomach be tied up in knots, and the mind run wild, imagining the worst-case scenarios. Danger is real. That is why we must truly be committed to follow Jesus and be faithful "unto death" (Revelation 2:10). We do not go out of our way searching for danger, but faith is sometimes tried by hot fire. Daniel's was.

It is also true that Daniel could have tried to justify defiling himself with the thought, "You know what, I know that eating and drinking those things is not right, but **in the long run, I believe it would probably benefit** the Jewish captives." We could see how young Hebrew men submitting to instructions could possibly cause the king or others in the Babylonian government to go a little easier on the Israelite captives in general. But, Daniel did not take that approach. Instead, he made up his mind that he was going to take the course of action that he knew was right. You and I need to do the same, and not try to justify wrongdoing by appealing to the supposed "good" that could come out of it.

Daniel and his friends were in a tough situation. They could have tried to rationalize doing what would have defiled them. Thankfully, they did not. Let us all determine that, with God as our Helper, we will do our best to live with Him and for Him, regardless of what might happen in the process.