

Title: Be a Daniel, to fear God and not man

Scripture reading: 2 Kings chapter 20 v 12- 18

At that time Berodach-Baladan the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that Hezekiah had been sick. And Hezekiah was attentive to them, and showed them all the house of his treasures—the silver and gold, the spices and precious ointment, and all his armory—all that was found among his treasures. There was nothing in his house or in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them. Then Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah, and said to him, "What did these men say, and from where did they come to you?" So Hezekiah said, "They came from a far country, from Babylon." And he said, "What have they seen in your house?" So Hezekiah answered, "They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shown them." Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD: 'Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and what your fathers have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,' says the LORD. 'And they shall take away some of your sons who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.'"

Intro:

This past week was VBS week here in our church and we took at the first 6 chapters of Daniel. These 6 chapters start the book off with a narrative of events of Daniels life and the kings he served under his captivity. The theme we taught the children was no matter what, we should always be a Daniel, to fear God, and not man, to always do his will, his calling, no matter how scary, or how big the task maybe, we should always want to tell the truth and do what is right, even if we have to stand in front of the greatest most powerful kings in the world. To fear God and not man. And I thought to myself, I had spent the last 8 months preparing for these 5 days in teaching the children these principles, and as pastor Phil needed a substitute for this Sunday, why not take the teachings from the same chapters that I had been studying and just add the adult teaching for a Sunday morning message with maybe a little less dramatic reading, only a little.

Now the first 6 chapters of the book of Daniel is a picture of the life events that took place through Daniel's life in captivity and the various kings he served under, trials and temptations perils and persecutions from the highest thrones to the lowest dungeons was the life story of Daniel. Today I want to look at 4 events of his life and have us ask ourselves 'am I a Daniel' and as the title says do I fear God, or do I fear man? Do I give in to the world's temptations and pressures or do I stand firm on God's word at all costs? Well let's start with our first king, King Nebuchadnezzar.

I. Under King Nebuchadnezzar

A the captivity

In the reading that was read for us from 2 kings we read of a prophecy, this prophecy was given to king Hezekiah and in 605 BC King Nebuchadnezzar fulfilled that prophecy, Just as the prophet Isaiah had prophesied to King Hezekiah when he spoke *'Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and what your fathers have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,' says the LORD. 'And they shall take away some of your sons who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.'* this Nebuchadnezzar fulfilled that prophecy. From that siege he took back to Babylon articles from the temple Daniel chapter 1 verse 2 *"And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the articles of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the articles into the treasure house of his god."* He also took young men, or children in verse 3, 4 and 6 *"some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles, young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans. Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah"*. Now for three years these young men were put into training for the service of the king and so begins the story of Daniel.

Shortly after their arrival in Babylon the first test of their faith was placed upon them, verse 5 of Daniel chapter 1 *'And the king appointed for them a daily provision of the king's delicacies and of the wine which he drank'* Verse 8 *'But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.'* Now most commentaries believe that the king's food was probably not so much delicacies but foods that the Jews were not allowed to eat as commanded by God. And not only was this request liable to get Daniel and his friends into trouble but it could cost them their very lives, even the chief eunuch feared what the outcome of such a request could entail, verse 10 this is the chief eunuch speaking to Daniel *"I fear my lord the king, who has appointed your food and drink. For why should he see your faces looking worse than the young men who are your age? Then you would endanger my head before the king."* Death is what would be waiting for Daniel and his friends if these new boys would be found worse looking than the others, and if the king found out that the chief had disobeyed his orders, so the life of the chief eunuch would also be in jeopardy. So did Daniel fear the chief eunuch or the king in regards to the food and drink placed before him? No, he feared God rather than man; he feared the God of Israel and not the king of Babylon and thus did not defile himself. As a young captured boy surrounded by mighty men and king he stood firm in his stand.

How about you? How do you respond to certain situations around you in your life? Not so much in the realm of food but how about alcohol? How do you answer the question when someone asks, what do **you** think is it wrong to have just one beer? Or do **you** think it's wrong to have a social drink? Do you hesitate with and answer? How do you react when the situation comes up were you are at a gathering or group of people and someone all of a sudden comes out with beer or drinks and they go round and everybody takes one and then, it stops at you, what do you do? Is this the time you contemplate whether or not it's ok to have just one? Do you frantically think up of an excuse that will satisfy the pressure coming against you, do you tell yourself God won't mind if I have just one, or do you completely avoid the real reason you feel convictions?

The Bible says *‘Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.’* 1 Corinthians 16 and 17. Just as Daniel said he did not want to defile himself so you must stand up for what is right, you must purposed in your heart that you will not defile yourself or your body. Not with alcohol, not with drugs, not with smoking or any other sin associated with your body. I have often thought that the last two words in that passage should be turned around and be made into a question and should read like this *‘Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple... are you?’* what is being offered on this temple called your body? Is it something God would approve of or is it defiling you? Because if you are a Christian your body is the temple, which temple are you?

Well we continue with Daniels story, Next trial the same king only this time it was the golden image, and deals with Daniels friends.

B The golden image

Daniel chapter 3 verses 1 to 6 “Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Then a herald cried aloud: "To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; “and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.”

Here the stage was set for Daniels friends, the image was in place, the music played, and an entire nation bowed to an idol of gold, except three men. When the king found out he became very angry and in rage the king commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego be brought to him, and if by chance they did not understand the proper procedure when the music plays he gives them a second chance in verse 15 of chapter 3 *"Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?"* remember here is a king who had already defeated their nation, their cities, their people, their culture and thus far the king believed that their God had not helped or protected them during this time “who is the god who will deliver you from my hand?” was his taunt, because so far there was nothing holding his hands back. And how did these young men respond verse 17 and 18 *"If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us*

from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. "But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up." And then our great king Nebuchadnezzar goes and blows a gasket, he flips his lid over what these boys said. Not only did they continue to fully trust God to deliver them from the furnace and the hand of the king they also added the statement that even if God would not deliver them from this situation they were in at this very moment, they would still not serve faults gods or the image which was set up. Even if God would not spare them from this death sentence and they should die in that fiery furnace they would not bow down to the golden image or serve other gods. This is serving and glorifying God to the utmost.

We don't often bow down to idols or images these days, do we? Or Do we? We may not bow down to golden images but how much time, money and effort and dedication do we give to things like professional sports and athletes? Do we idolize the game or the athletes in it? How much enthusiasm is there when their team wins or anger when they lose? Just a while ago there was a story of a Brazilian referee who broke up a fight on the field and was then also attacked and in his defense he stabbed a player with a knife who later died in hospital, the fans then rush the field, beheaded the referee and placed it on a stick at center field and then proceeded to quarter his body. Idol worship with sacrifice included. Or what about money, or houses, or cars, jobs, or possessions of untold amounts, all things which are not evil in normal application, but has it become an obsession that you no longer have time for God? Or how about the area of music? How much time do you give listening to music, and what kind? Daniels friends were told when *"you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image"* Our North American culture and societies around the world have pumped up and hyped up the music industry to such a degree that it fills people's minds to such an extent that they all have become worshipers of that which is not of God, Daniels friends were only to bow to an image when they heard the music, but our culture has made music the idol, just look and any big name concerts today thousands upon thousands of people throng to the stadiums to hear the music, to bounce with the beat, to scream and shriek with the crowds for the idols on the stage and the music that plays, there is a god of this world in the area of music and his name is Satan, and he and his minions entertain, no I should say control America and much of the world through music.

I think it was Ken Ham who said there are only two camps you are either for God or against Him, where is your music taking you? Where are idols taking you? Is it for God, think carefully now, is it for God or against Him because there are very few things want to remain neutral.

John 15:19 "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you". Now I don't have time to get into all the different angles and aspects of music but I do think that David Cloud and the research he has done in this area of music is a good place to start, you may not agree with me but I know if the hymns we play offend the world then we know we are on the right track. Alan Ives in his message "How to Tell the Right King of Music"? Asked this question to the congregation, what kind of music should people be hearing when they walk by this church? I think that it is so wonderful that this church sings hymns but I ask what kind of music should people be hearing from your cars, your phones, your houses. 1 Corinthians 12 and 13 *"Now we*

have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” Do we fear man and join in with his pleasure of this world or do we fear God and take a stand in what is right? Look objectively at our surrounding, Idols are not just 60 cubit golden images anymore, there're all around us and bombard us continually. That brings us to our second king Daniel served under king Belshazzar.

II. Under King Belshazzar

The chapter starts off with the party, Chapter 5 verses 1 and 2 *“Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in the presence of the thousand. While he tasted the wine, Belshazzar gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple which had been in Jerusalem, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them.”* If you remember King Nebuchadnezzar took the vessels of gold and silver from the Jewish temple and placed them into the treasure house of his god, Belshazzar took it one step further and had the vessels taken from their temple and used at this party for common drinking vessels, what blasphemy do you suppose this was for the Jews at this time, in my bible commentary wrights “in drinking to pagan idols from the vessels set apart for God’s use, Belshazzar blasphemed the Almighty”.

In the BE Commentary by Warren W. Wiersbe he commented like this and I quote:

“Was the king drunk when he ordered the servants to bring in the consecrated vessels that had been taken from the temple in Jerusalem? Nebuchadnezzar had decreed that all peoples were to give respect to the God of the Jews ([Dan. 3:29](#)), and he himself had praised the Lord for His sovereignty and greatness ([4:34-37](#)). But as the years passed, the great king's words were forgotten, and Belshazzar treated the God of Israel with arrogant disrespect. Both the men and the women at the feast impudently used these valuable consecrated vessels like common drinking cups, and while they were drinking, they praised the false gods of Babylon! After all, the gods of Babylon had defeated the God of the Hebrews, so what was there to fear? Belshazzar and his guests could not have behaved more blasphemously. But people can defy the will of God and blaspheme His name only so long, and then the hand of the Lord begins to move.”

Bible Exposition Commentary - Bible Exposition Commentary – Be Resolute (Daniel).

End of quote.

And the hand of the Lord did move, it came in the form of fingers of a man’s hand writing on the wall, and what happened to Belshazzar? Well he went all out of joint with fear because of the hand and if I were to describe King Belshazzar I would have to describe him as spoiled brat. Here is probably one of the most powerful people in the world, his father had conquered most of if not all the area around them including the Jews, and Belshazzar was just living the life, he was basking in arrogance of handed down glory, until this moment that this hand appeared. Even when Daniel is brought before the king his arrogances continues look and verse 13 of chapter 5 *“Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king spoke, and said to*

Daniel, "Are you that Daniel who is one of the captives from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah?" hello? Belshazzar knew very well who Daniel was because look at how Daniel responds to the king, let's turn to it Daniel chapter 5 verse 17 and we read to 24 Daniel doesn't just give him the interpretation he gives him what we would call an ear full chapter 5 verse 17:

Then Daniel answered, and said before the king, *"Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another; yet I will read the writing to the king, and make known to him the interpretation. -- "O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father a kingdom and majesty, glory and honor." And because of the majesty that He gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whomever he wished, he executed; whomever he wished, he kept alive; whomever he wished, he set up; and whomever he wished, he put down. "But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. "Then he was driven from the sons of men, his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. They fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses. "But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, **although you knew all this.** "And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines, have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know; and the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified.*

And then he continues on giving the interpretation of the writing on the wall and that very night the life of King Belshazzar was taken, the hand of God had moved and the kingdom was over taken by the Medes and Persians.

Well how about you? Are you living the life of Belshazzar? Believing in your heart that you are in control of your life and think you don't need God? Thinking that I'm invincible, Or maybe you think God is just a Sunday morning thing and I have the rest of the week for myself. Daniel said in verse 23 it is *"God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your way"*. Do you fear him? Belshazzar had one day to get things right as Daniel told him in verse 27, *"You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting."* And that night he was slain. When will be your last day? Your last hour? Your last moment? We never know if we will get a warning or not so you must be ready and the fear of the lord is a good start.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom. Psalms 111:10

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, Proverbs 1:7

And in Job 28:28 God spoke to man He said, *'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, And to depart from evil is understanding.'*

Acts 9:31 *Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.*

How are you walking? Is God sending Daniels into your life telling you things you don't want to hear? Telling you things you shouldn't be doing, or how about you Christians are you being a Daniel? This past week we taught the children of how Daniel did not fear kings even when he was the bearer of bad news and death would be waiting. Are you telling people about Jesus and the life he gives if you come to him? Do you tell them about the good news? Or does the fear of man get in the way, I know it does for me, I could not preach to you about this if I didn't first speak to me. We must fear God and not man. And that brings me to the last point.

III. Under King Darius

In chapter 6 of the book of Daniel we have probably one of the most well known historical accounts of the bible and that is Daniel in the lions den and an amazing account it is but before we can go there we first have to go back to the beginning of the chapter to see how he got here, chapter 6 starts off with the king Darius taking over the Babylonian empire after the execution of Belshazzar, of this great empire the king set 120 satraps over the whole kingdom. These were to be provincial governors so that the king would suffer no loss and over these 120 he set three governors and one of them was Daniel. Verse 3 of chapter 6 *"Then this Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king gave thought to setting him over the whole realm."* Just like Pharaoh of Egypt did with Joseph, King Darius wanted to do with Daniel and just like the bond that was between Pharaoh and Joseph I think existed between King Darius and Daniel. But jealousy consumed the other governors and satraps and they sought to condemn Daniel but their plans was to no avail verse 4 and 5 *"So the governors and satraps sought to find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him. Then these men said, "We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God."* And that they did, with honey dipped words they came before the king saying "King Darius, live forever!" "We have consulted together and establish a royal stature and to make a firm decree, that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions." "Oh and by the way you look fabulous in the color purple" well there trick worked and the king signed the decree which was the death sentence for Daniel.

How did Daniel respond to this decree? Did he fear man? No. Did he fear the king? Did he fear the lions? No. in verse 10 we read *"Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days."* The decree was signed, and Daniel knew it. The writing was made public to all peoples, and Daniel understood it, the punishment was outlined and stated that anyone who petitions any god or man for thirty days except the king shall be cast into the lion's den; this was

a guaranteed death sentence for anyone who disobeyed and what did Daniel do he prayed, he prayed to God, he prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days. He feared his God, more than man, even kings who had the power of death at their finger tips.

How about you? How about when you find yourself sitting in a crowded restaurant with loud teenagers off to one side at another table, big construction workers on a table on the other side, men in expensive suits sitting at a table across from you, when your food arrives do you pray? Or is there this strange feeling of fear creeping up inside of you that they are all watching and think what will they think of me? What if these people are sitting at the table with you? Do you pray? How about with your family your wife, your children? Do you pray together with them? Or do you feel the fear of man because they are watching? God is watching and he is watching you to see if you will give Him the glory and not man.

Mark 8:38 *“For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”*

The fear of man will destroy you and your testimony and the devil will bring you down a little lower every time and every single moment you give in to this fear. The bible says in 1 Titus 2:8 *“I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;”* 1 Thessalonians 5:17 and part of 18 *“pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks;”* and as Jesus spoke to his disciples in Matthew 26:41 *“Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”*

In one sense we as Christians are all like Daniel, we are captives in a world where we are continually bombarded with things that want us to go against the will of God. For Daniel it was Babylon, its king, its army, the country he was captive in, the foods and customs of a pagan nation. For us it is a society that continually blasts us to conform to this world from fashions and styles, to entertainment and industry, it is all trying to get us to fall by the way of the world, but what is most saddening is that so often it is our own desires, our own lusts and preferences and sinful flesh and the fear of man that keeps us captive in this world. But as Christians we are not to be the captives, we are the ones who have been set free, we have been bought back, we are the ones who have been freed from the penalty of death, but only if we choose too, only if we want to stand and be a Daniel in this *“adulterous and sinful generation”* will we gain the victory, *“He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”* John 12:25

2 Timothy chapter 3 verses 12-15 *“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”*

And so in conclusion we looked at this temple of our body for God and asked the question are you standing against the temptations that want to defile this temple, we looked at

standing strong and making sure that we do not idolize anything of this world be it sports, music, or even your job or possessions, anything that takes preference over God and to guard our hearts of such things. Or how about in Belshazzar's case do you have the fear of God in every breath you take? Because it is "*God who holds your breath in His hand* or are you living your life your way? Ignorant of what God wants of you. And lastly do we fear man when it comes to prayer, do we fear what others will think of us when we bow our head, or do we want to give God glory in doing so. Fear God and not man is what we taught the children in VBS this past week we taught the children we should always be a Daniel, to fear God, and always want to do what God wants us to do, no matter how scary, or how big the trouble may be, we should always want to tell the truth and do what is right, even if we have to stand in front of the greatest king in the world and bring him bad news. How often are there great kings in our life these days with the power of death over our heads? None, just men, 1 Peter 2:17 *Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.*

My aim of this message was not pull you down but to give you a renewed strength, a desire to standing strong and purpose in your heart to do what is right and standing for truth, may we all be a Daniel, to fear God and not man.