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DATE: 2ND – 6TH DECEMBER, 2019

THEME EXPOSITION: DANIEL 1:8a

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“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself ...”

CORE VALUE: INTEGRITY=====DANIEL: INTEGRITY UNDER TEST

LEADING QUESTIONS

- What does it mean to ‘purpose in one’s heart’?
- What does it mean to ‘not to defile oneself’?
- How can one arrive at such a hard, tough and bold decision?
- Why make such firm, risky and bold decisions?
- What are the possible consequences of such decisions?
- What are the benefits of such bold decisions?
- How do we sustain such bold decisions?
- When can we make such bold decisions?
- Is integrity important in a believer’s life?

EXTRACT IN ITS CONTEXT

❖ **Before: Daniel1: 1-7**

This section talks about the captivity of the Israelites from Jerusalem of Judah to Babylon by king Nebuchadnezzar alongside part of the vessels from the house of God to the treasure house of his god. Among the captives were four young men of Judah namely; - Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. These were renamed as follows:-

- ✓ Daniel= Belteshazzar
- ✓ Hananiah= Shadrach
- ✓ Mishael=Meshach
- ✓ Azariah=Abednego

Having been carefully chosen with the right qualities i.e.

- ✓ No blemish
- ✓ Well favoured
- ✓ Skillful in all wisdom
- ✓ Cunning in knowledge
- ✓ Understanding science

These young men were supposed to be put under special diet for three good years before they appeared in the presence of king nebu. It seems like in the Jewish/ Israelite culture, the diet had profane foods and drinks which forced Daniel to revolt. The bible singles out and focuses on Daniel, no wonder the statement... but Daniel purposed in his heart not to defile himself...v8-- God is looking for a man/woman not men/women in order to use him/her as his noble vessel. The other three young men come in from v9 onwards.

May be this could explain the beginning of the favour and rise of Daniel to higher positions of leadership==provincial governor/ administrator.

- ❖ After: Daniel 1: 9- fwd.=== focuses on the favour upon Daniel and his colleagues not to indulge in the King's food and drinks but instead eat pulse (mtama) and drink water only for ten days before they were inspected. Having outdone their counterparts who were feeding on delicacies, God started the long journey of proving himself God through these four faithful young men.... **through you....Ezekiel 36:23.**

In fact these four young men were found better than their counterparts....**v19... among them ALL, was found NONE like Daniel(Belteshazzar), Hananiah(Shadrach), Mishael(Meshach) and Azariah(Abednego).**

Then **v20....and in ALL matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them TEN TIMES BETTER THAN all the magicians and astrologers...**

- **Who said these words in the extract?**

These words were said by Daniel as the author of the same book in the Bible. He declared them in his heart and that's why the Bible talks of "...Daniel **purposed in his heart...**"

Daniel is one of the Major Prophets alongside Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel who started from a very humble beginning/background just like most of us do. Thus, your background should never limit the far you can go with God. He was chosen from among many youths who had been taken captive into Babylon under king Nebuchadnezzar. He was put to test when he was asked to eat and drink from the king's table, which according to the teachings of his fathers such meats and drinks were a defilement of oneself. So he was to choose between **pleasing the king and offending the true God of his fathers or honour God and offend the king.**

This had all the repercussions of losing opportunities in the king's palace but gaining favour with God. His character is presented to us as an example of what god's grace can make of fallen men by nature and corrupted by sin. His record of a self-denying life is an encouragement to our common weak humanity that we can gather strength and firmly resist temptation and stand for the right under the severest trial. Daniel might have found a very good reason to depart from his good conduct, but the approval of God was to him more important than the favour of the most powerful men on earth-"... dearer than life itself..."

God says," **Those who honour me, I will honour.**" 1 Samuel 2:30;

John 14:21-“...He who **has my commandments and keeps them**, it is he who loves me. And **he who loves me will be loved by my father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.**”

John 12:26-“...If anyone serves me, let him follow me, and where I am, there my servant will be also. **If anyone serves me, him my father will honour.**”

- Why did he say them?
- When were these words said?
- To who were these words targeted?
- What was the aim of saying these words in the extract?

WHY THE EXTRACT? = MAIN CONCERNS /OBJECTIVES

Generally, the book of Daniel is a unique mix of the history of occultism/polytheism and the eschatological events surrounding the Messiah. It's a blend to show how God can use mortal men and women of integrity to prove his sovereignty.

Specifically, the chosen text aims at achieving the following objectives:-

- Target at **raising a Daniel generation** at a time when many people have compromised their faith in their god== **men and women of integrity---Dan.1:8a**
Shinning like stars—Philippians 2:14-16, Ephesians 5:3, Rom 12:1,
Keep away from them----Rom 16:17
- Help to **make such hard, tough, risky and bold decisions** in life **when called for.**
- Help **keep the faith** in God.
- Help in developing **strong intimacy with God whom** we know and serve.
- **Ascertain the true God** after understanding/knowing the god of our fathers like Daniel did----exodus 20:1-6 -- And God spoke all these words saying, “**I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, thou shalt have no other gods before me... for I the Lord your God is a jealous God...**”

John 4:19-24...the woman saith unto him, “ Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet, **our fathers worshipped in this mountain**, and ye say, that in Jerusalem, is the place where men ought to worship... **ye worship ye know not what, we know what we worship...**but the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall **worship the father in truth and in spirit, for the father seeketh such to worship him...**God is spirit and they that worship **must worship him in spirit and truth**”

- Keeping **holy unto the Lord---Mathew 5:8,**
Temples of God----1 Cor 3:16
Proved holy through you----Ezekiel 36:23----ROLE MODELS/MENTORS

- **No defilement** of our faith at whatever cost---**seek good not evil that you may live**---
Amos 5:14
- Foster **integrity** in life as a born again Christian- 2 Cor 5:17

1. INTRODUCTION

Daniel was a highly placed man in the regime of king Nebuchadnezzar while in exile in Babylon. He was equally well learned and had all the qualities of a good leader that's why he was chosen among many. He never resorted to corruption to get to higher levels. Being a Hebrew, **he had been taught by his fathers that Yahweh was God** and that there was none other like unto him. In living for him, some things were prohibited to include certain foods and drinks. His background in being a refugee in exile never bogged him down. It didn't limit him either. He **purposed in his heart, not to defile himself**====**Integrity under test.**

Today, we **need people we call spiritual fathers** with good standing for us to inherit and learn the right spiritual issues/aspects. Failure to have such fathers is likely to cause us to cripple down spiritually== "**spiritual orphans.**"

2. KEY ISSUES IN INTEGRITY===PURPOSING NOT TO DEFILE ONESELF

a) How can one arrive at such a hard, tough, risky and bold decision?

✚ After fully knowing your God= those who know their God-

Dan 11:32.....and such as do wickedly against the covenant shall be corrupt by flatteries, BUT the people that know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.

✚ By strategically taking your position / stand as a believer in the one and only true God= no other God== **consciously purposing= Isaiah 45:5, 44:6-8,**

Exodus 20:1-3...and God spoke all these words, I am the lord thy God which have brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, thou shall have no other God before me.... V5....you shall not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them, for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God..

Joshua 24: 14-15....now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt, and serve ye the Lord, and if it seems evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood.....BUT as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

Exodus 34:14, 2kings 19:15,

Psalm 86:10-11.....for you are great and does wondrous things, you are God alone...teach me your way o lord, I will walk in your truth, unite my heart to fear your name.

- ✚ Being ready to live a holy life== choosing **never to defile** oneself==Zechariah 14:20-21, 2cor 7:1,Hebrews 12:14, psalm 119:9, 2 timothy 1:9
- ✚ When faced with very difficult situations which call for radical decisions which may not be pleasant unto men but right with God.
- ✚ Having a desire to keep the faith that was started in us==the author and finisher of our faith is faithful. He who started the good work in us is faithful to the end.

b) Why make such firm, risky and bold decisions?

- To prove that our God is genuine= no other God besides him= Exodus 20: 1-6
- To prove our confidence in the God we believe / ascribe to
- To reveal the intents of the heart= at times the heart is so deceitful=Jer. 17:9
- To show that holiness is a priority in your life and not another option= 1 pet 1:16; micah6:8, Leviticus 11:44; 19:1-2,15-18

c) What are the possible consequences of such decisions?== Decisions have consequences

- Rejection== happy are you when men reject you... Matthew 5: 10-12
- Death threats/ actual death==never fear he who can kill the body but not the soul=Mathew 10:28; romans 8:36, psalms 44:22
- Seclusion / mud-slinging / character assassination== Jesus was called names.... Beelzebub or beelzebul==prince of demons= derived from a philistine god= Mathew 12:24, Luke 11:15

d) What are the benefits of such bold decisions?

- Being rooted/ established in the faith we profess= col.2:7, Eph.3:17
- Developing total confidence in our God= 2 Timothy 1:7, Romans 8:15, 1 Cor 2:12
 - Becoming pillars of integrity in Christian circles== role models/mentors=== Proved holy **through you----Ezekiel 36:23----role models**
- Guards the heart from deceitfulness==Proverbs 4:23, psalm 139:23-24
- Leading a **holy life** unto the Lord as a **recipe** for inheriting the heavens==Hebrews 12:14---no one will see the kingdom of God without being holy
- Finishing well==Victory---2 timothy 4:7—I have finished my course/the race successfully...now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

2 How do we sustain such bold decisions?

- ✓ By creating a purpose in your life= living a purposeful life= vision=dream----for where there is no vision, people perish....Prov. 29:18... people cast off restraint... they lose control, hence end up perishing... no future
But God says that he has good plans for us...to give us a future and a hope---
Jeremiah 29:11
- ✓ By guarding one's heart from which comes life
- ✓ Integrity as key in our Christian lives
- ✓ Living holy life== holy to the Lord
- ✓ Keeping the faith as a priority
- ✓ By creating a desire to finish well....as the deer pants for the brooks of water, so does my soul thirst for you Lord.... Psalm 42:1-2

3. CONCLUSION/ EXHORTATION

Just like Daniel, it is very much possible to live a holy life even when other people surrounding you do compromise and defile themselves. You can choose to be alone but with God.

God is looking for men and women who maintain high levels of integrity in a generation that's full of compromise and evil as the in- thing, fashion or pathway to higher positions of influence.

People can make you a laughing stock and embarrass you, but God will always embrace you.

NB:

This is not a research paper. It is God's message to mankind. Fear God and live. Amen.

Connecting with God... Transforming lives.