

Undeified: Making A Godly Response to an Ungodly Culture

Daniel 1-3

Little is known about Patrick. There is general agreement he was active as a Christian missionary during the fifth century but the exact dates are not known. According to his own autobiography Patrick records that when he was about 16 he was captured from his home in Britain by Irish pirates and taken as a slave to Ireland. He lived in Ireland for about six years serving as a shepherd before escaping and returning to his family. It is believed that though he was not yet fully converted, prayer and a life of growing faith enabled the young Patrick to endure his years of slavery and that God Himself gave Patrick a vision telling him to flee home.

Sometime after returning home Patrick came to full faith and converted to Christianity. After becoming a cleric, Patrick had another dream. In this dream the people of Ireland called him to return and bring them what he found. Patrick heard in that dream the call of God. He returned to pagan Ireland, to a life of opposition and accusation from an ungodly culture. He returned to spread Christianity in northern and western Ireland. He served as a bishop later in life and is believed to have died on March 17, 493 A.D. By the 7th century Patrick had become a man of legend and the patron saint of Ireland.

The prophet, Daniel, too, was taken by others into exile only to become a spiritual advisor and benefactor to his captors. Daniel was a young man, perhaps a teenager in a noble house in the court of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, in Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon took Daniel captive in 605 B.C., twenty years before the final fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

Daniel “should have been” a defeated man living a defeated life in the clutches of his foes. In the thinking of the Ancient Near East, when one nation conquered another, it was not just one people conquering another, it was seen as one god overpowering and proving superior over another god. The god who won was the supreme god, the real god. The god who lost was nothing, or else he was a vile, mean-hearted being who cared nothing for his people and abandoned them in their hour of need.

The Babylonian victory over the Israelite kingdom of Judah would have been perceived as the victory of Babylon’s pagan gods over Israel’s God. Daniel “should have been” glad he was even alive given the inadequacy of his god in the eyes of his captors. But that was not Daniel and weak was Daniel’s God!

You too are exiles living in a strange land that is not your home, serving God in a culture that does not worship God as God or give Him thanks. We are citizens of heaven through faith in Jesus Christ. Our allegiance lies elsewhere than to the ideologies, philosophies, and social trends of this world. We too live daily with the question, “How do I live boldly for Jesus in a world that neither understands nor desires Him?”

One of us was in a conversation not long ago with one person about another the person. The person under discussion is one who prefers to use the personal pronouns “they” and “them” in reference to himself. The Christian in that conversation offered their thoughts on the sex and

gender confusion that currently runs rampant in our culture. They were informed in no uncertain terms they needed to get with the program. Start respecting other people's opinions. Try a little love because love is what it's all about. Or maybe, just keep your thoughts to yourself because the rest of us don't want to hear it.

More and more we who follow Jesus—we who were warned by Jesus that the world that did not love Him would not love us—we face more and more each day the question, “How do I respond to family and friends and coworkers and community who desperately need God's truth but are running farther and farther away every day?”

This morning, I invite you to consider Daniel, a man in exile who “should have been” a defeated man living a defeated life in exile, and see how he handled opposition faithfully and victoriously.

Now, I'm making some assumptions here.

- I am assuming your motivation here is primarily spiritual. You are a follower of Jesus. Your faith is solidly in Him. You know He is the Savior and is your supreme Example and Master, and that what you want more than anything else is to follow Him, serve Him, and honor Him faithfully.
- I'm assuming you know that what I just described about you was true of Jesus. His single heart desire was to honor the Father and do the Father's will faithfully. He did not compromise with the world. He loved God with His whole heart, mind, soul, and strength and His neighbor as Himself. He lived in humble submission to the character and will of God and calls His disciples to the same disciplined, devoted life.
- I'm assuming you know Jesus is gracious and kind and faithful and firm. He is appropriate and unswerving. He presses forward and does not retreat or cower because His hope is in the Lord His God. His perspective is eternal, not only for Himself but also for those He came to save. He sees not only who we are but who we will become when our faith is in Him and His Spirit is in us.
- I'm assuming you know you cannot serve two masters. You cannot live with one foot in the world and one foot in heaven. You cannot love the world and love the Savior. You cannot accommodate two wills and two ways. I'm assuming that, for you, there is only one Way, Truth, and Life, and His name is Jesus and you are fully committed to Him.

So, with these assumptions in mind, what do we do? **How do we respond to the demands of the world for spiritual and moral compromise?** Let's consider some principles we can gain from Daniel's godly faithfulness confronting an ungodly culture.

1. (Daniel 1:1-17) Identify the tidbits of treason and refuse to indulge.
 - a. King's food was an enticement to believe the blessings of Marduk outweigh the failure of Yahweh.
 - b. Bribe for a change of loyalty
 - c. Daniel sees the offer for what it is and politely offers a different plan with a better promise.
 - i. **Hebrews 12:1-3 (ESV)** *Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which*

clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

- ii. **Colossians 3:1-3 (ESV)** ¹ *If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*
- d. Don't try to argue with people using their own terms.
 - i. Focus on Jesus and what He has for them.
 - ii. Don't take the bait.
 - (1) Gender dysphoria is a symptom not the disease.
 - (2) The disease is a broken, sinful heart.
- 2. (Daniel 2:1-49) Understand the spiritual nature of the times you live in and what to expect from God.
 - a. The Statue in the Dream
 - b. You live in the toes of Nebuchadnezzar's statue:
 - i. **Daniel 2:41-43 (ESV)** ⁴¹ *And as you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom, but some of the firmness of iron shall be in it, just as you saw iron mixed with the soft clay. ⁴² And as the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle. ⁴³ As you saw the iron mixed with soft clay, so they will mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay.*
 - ii. The rock cut out but not with human hands will strike the feet, crush the statue, and become a mountain that fills the whole earth.
 - c. The statue stands until the Rock returns, but once the Rock comes, the statue will not stand and nothing can stop the Rock from filling the whole earth with the glory.
 - d. You cannot change the course of the whole world but you can impact the lives of some people by telling them what hope is coming!
- 3. (Daniel 3:16-18) Decide in advance whose side you are on and what price you will pay.
 - a. **Daniel 3:16-18 (ESV)** ¹⁶ *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷ If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."*
 - b. Furnace 10x hotter, soldiers died throwing them in, Jesus showed up, King calls them out and proclaims God to be God Most High
 - c. Joshua and Jesus
 - i. Joshua - Choose you this day whom you will serve, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.
 - ii. Jesus - **Luke 14:25-33 (ESV)** ²⁵ *Now great crowds accompanied him, and*

he turned and said to them, ²⁶ “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸ For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹ Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, ³⁰ saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ ³¹ Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³² And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. ³³ So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

- d. Choose. Decide today whose side you will take and what price you will pay. As long as that decision remains unmade you will not have the grace or the courage to face the culture faithfully and victoriously for Christ.

The apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesian church that the path to spiritual maturity in Christ included “speaking the truth in love.” The truth is the God made this world as an expression of His glory for His glory and the only way for us to reach our full potential as human beings in this world is to pursue His glory. And the only way to successfully pursue His glory is through faithfulness to Him and to His word.

God’s word reveals that He is the Creator of our bodies. Bodies belong to the One that created them, right? If the Creator retains creation rights over creation, then it is not true to say, “My body, my choice.” To follow that philosophy makes you a thief. You are stealing from God an asset He has allowed you to borrow and steward but retains rights over. Stealing is sin. Sin subjects us to wrath and death. Why die? Why face God’s wrath? Repent!

How do we respond to a culture gone crazy? We respond faithfully, with God’s truth, one person at a time, without compromise but with wisdom and grace, always taking God’s side and trusting Him for the outcome.