

# Daniel's Separation From the World

*Dr. Joel R. Beeke*

- Psalter 351
- Read Daniel 1
- Psalter 325
- Psalter 69:1, 2, 6
- Pealter 429:4

Our text-words you can find in Daniel 1, verses 8, 14, and 21: "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.... So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.... And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus...."

With God's help we wish to consider *Daniel's Separation from the World* in the following three thoughts:

1. How to resist temptation
2. How to go through trial
3. How to live

I repeat: *Daniel's Separation from the World*, first, how to resist temptation; second, how to go through trial; third, how to live.

## **I. How to Resist Temptation**

Dear congregation, perhaps you've heard the expression many times, "Dare to be a Daniel, dare to stand alone. Most of the time when we hear this, we think of Daniel in the lions' den, But "dare to be a Daniel" also applies to the first chapter of the book of Daniel, which is too often "a forgotten chapter." Today I want to consider with you Daniel in Daniel 1.

As the book of Daniel opens, we meet Daniel in the college of Babylon. He was probably only fifteen years old. He and three of his Israelitish friends were forced to go to a college in a city where they had no desire to be. They were carried away captive by Nebuchadnezzar to the large city and college of Babylon, far from home

and the temple where they had worshipped God.

Babylon was a worldly city full of temptations. It was the capital of the vast kingdom over which Nebuchadnezzar was reigning. It was a city with walls as high as towers and so thick that four chariots could safely ride abreast on top of them. Inside, all was luxury. It was the richest city in the world. Hanging gardens, supported by pillars, were sprinkled throughout Babylon.

Babylon was filled with pride, lust, and sin. Daniel and his friends were brought to the two most magnificent buildings in the very heart of Babylon — the king's palace and the temple of "Bel," the supreme god of Babylon.

No doubt the Babylonian college was particularly full of temptations, immediately Daniel was confronted with a whole new way of life. According to the king's commandments, courtiers were appointed to train these young men (as well as other young men from a variety of conquered countries) so that after three years all the captives were supposed to be true Babylonians — both outwardly in behavior and inwardly in heart.

Everything had to change to meet the goal and demands of the proud Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel and his friends had to learn the language of Babylon. Only Babylonian clothing could be worn. Their names had to be changed. Instead of being named after the God of Israel they were named after the gods of Babylon. Daniel, which means, "God is my judge," was changed to Belteshazzar: "keeper of the hid treasures of Bel." Hananiah, the grace of God," was changed to Shadrach: "inspiration of the sun" — which they also worshipped as a god. Mishael, "the Lord is a strong God," became Meshach — "devoted to the goddess Shach," the goddess of their feasts. Azariah, meaning "the Lord is a help," was given the name Abednego — servant of Nebo," the god of fire.

Their food and drink were changed. No longer could they eat their simple Jewish diet, but now rich foods and wine, both of which had been previously consecrated to idols through the performing of sacrificial rites, were placed before them.

They were instructed in Babylonian education which was filled with heathenism. Babylonian literature, sciences, music, superstition, astrology,

soothsaying, sorcery, and religion were the classes" they had to take.

After three years of thorough indoctrination Daniel and his friends were to appear before the king as true Babylonians, having forgotten their former life, morals, education, and especially, *the God of Israel*.

Today we would call this "brainwashing," especially when you consider that Daniel could have almost anything a natural heart could want. He and his friends could live like princes. Nebuchadnezzar would spoil them into forgetfulness of their past and into allegiance to himself.

Dear friends, is the situation really any different today in the world? Babylon rightly became a symbol of the "world." Perhaps the world today does not tempt you in precisely the same way, but are not its current temptations, albeit somewhat less direct, just as powerful as in Daniel's day?

Consider worldly *language*. Is not this Babylonian world full of it? Profanity abounds. Secular humanism is even more commonly revealed in the speech of millions. Of the billions of words spoken every day, how many do you think honor God? Of the words that proceed from your mouth is there one word a day that glorifies God?

Are matters better with *clothing*? Let us be honest — much immodest, Babylonian clothing is worn nearly everywhere in society today. Our clothing conveys a message. What message are you conveying?

With *food and drink* some of us fare no better. Many eat like heathen, refusing to acknowledge God as the giver of all that we receive. Are we among them — or else, do we quickly say a prayer without concentrating upon the great God whom we are acknowledging?

"Babylon" is alive and prosperous today — also in its *education*. All around us today we are taught either that God does not exist at all or an attempt is made to portray Him as a God who loves everyone. Devil- and spirit-worship abound around the world. In fact, the devil has his visible classroom in many homes through television. He uses TV as an effective tool to teach principles contrary to the ten commandments hundreds of times every day. He uses radio, newspapers, magazines, books, movies — all to educate our minds in worldly, unbiblical ways.

Babylon is still here. The temptations are great and many, especially for young people. The pride of life, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye increase ten times faster than inflation.

And we are all guilty. We are in grave danger of being overcome by the flood of worldliness that sweeps over us and lives within us. Dear friend, has worldliness ever become sin for you? Do you realize how deeply you are prone to drink in its philosophy and its sins? Do you feel its dangers? Are you afraid of your own worldly hearts?

“Yes”, perhaps you will say, but did not Daniel have to go along with it? It was not his choice he was in Babylon, was it? After all, was he not in the land of the enemy, and is it not true, 'when in Rome we must do as the Romans? If he objected, the king would not hesitate to take his life — surely then he had better compromise somewhat, hadn't he? Otherwise he would lose his honorable position and perhaps even his life. And besides, aren't such things as clothing, food, names, and language rather small things to protest about?"

This was precisely Daniel's temptation. It is still our temptation today. Many go right along with the world while professing to be Christians. They attend church faithfully, pray and read the Bible regularly, For the rest, however, they think and act as the world thinks and acts, not wanting to be viewed as being different."

Young people, you understand this kind of peer pressure, don't you? When in school or at work, do you easily go along with "the crowd" or do you pray for strength to reject sin? Mixing Christianity and worldliness, Babylon and Jerusalem, keeping a form of religion but doing away with a separated and godly lifestyle — this is your temptation every day.

Part of this temptation is a mixed lifestyle which appears to make daily living so much easier. Little self-denial is needed. It is a lifestyle that can always be positive, can always say "yes"—"yes" to the church, "yes" to the world. How few realize that they are then saying "no" to God! God will not have a mixed, half-hearted people.

Dear young friends, what is your life? Is your talk Babylonian? Are you worshipping worldly idols — the idol of entertainment, of riches, of ease, yes, of

sinful self? Are you leading a life of "compromise"?

Compromise — that is one of Satan's favorite words when sin is involved. He likes to take us one step at a time down the slippery slope of iniquity. Gradually he aims to lead us into what has been rightly called "practical atheism"-- that is, living as if there were no God.

The first step down this slippery slope begins with abandoning secret prayer. Then the Bible is increasingly neglected. Searching of the Scriptures stops. We reason, "There are more things to do — I am so busy. Besides, we can't always be so strict — I would not care to have others see me so. It is wrong to be righteous overmuch,' I won't let happen what Jesus said must happen: "The world must hate you.' After all, don't I have to be kind to everyone?"

Such are Satan's reasonings and devices. More and more conscience is overstepped. Compromise. Babylon. Worldliness. It is a never-ending cycle. Eventually, the slippery slope may lead to a whole variety of sins — perhaps even drugs. And all the while, Satan is whispering, "Try it — how do you know what it is like unless you eat with the Babylonians and share their food? You will soon be used to it. It is not so bad. Experiment! You're old enough."

What a seemingly easy life Daniel could have had if he had only been willing to compromise! He could still have kept his own religion privately, couldn't he? All he had to do was go along with these customs and not take them so seriously. Are you such a compromiser?

By grace, however, Daniel could not compromise. The fear of the Lord was planted in his young heart. He could not be at home in the world. He could do no different than to say "no."

"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." Here lies the secret: "Daniel purposed *in his heart*." Not because of parents, church, or any person, but because it was the desire of his heart. It was not legalism. It was not fear of God's punishment. It was out of love for the Lord who is so worthy to be feared that "Daniel purposed in his heart" to say "no" to the world.

Daniel desired to walk before the Lord, to live to His honor and glory. He knew

from experience: "Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." Young people, can you say from the heart that you agree with Daniel? Do you dare to be a Daniel, dare to flee the world, dare to stand alone? Is the divine pressure of God's Word more weighty for you than the peer pressure of your friends?

There is still another reason "Daniel purposed in his heart" not to defile himself — *jealousy*. He was jealous for the Lord's Name, so he would not eat what was offered in the name of other gods, But he was also jealous over his own heart. He knew the power of temptation, of the world, and of Satan. He knew his own heart. He knew how quickly his conscience could be dulled, how soon secret prayer could suffer, how quickly communion with God could be broken. Therefore Daniel purposed in his heart."

By grace Daniel was more afraid of the snares of the devil and the pollutions of sin than of losing his own life. He would rather die than sin. That is not legalism. That is not being "righteous overmuch." Rather, that is love, God-given love, returning to the God who gave it.

Daniel received the courage to say "no" to sin from his heart as a gracious fruit of the Lord Jesus Christ who purposed in His heart from eternity to say "no" to sin for His entire life on earth. He gave His heart and life to the death of the cross in behalf of His Daniels who were by nature enemies of God but were made to fear and love His Name. May the Lord make us jealous of such Daniels. We often purpose in our minds or conscience, but how different that is from proposing through faith in our hearts!

This is real life, real living, real purpose. "Daniel purposed in his heart not to defile himself." Let us pray for grace to reject the world's selfish lifestyles and to seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness!

With such laudable, God-glorifying motives we would be quick to think, "The Lord will now hurry to make everything well for Daniel. Now everything will go easy for him."

But no. The trial was yet to come. Let's focus on this trial in our second thought.

## **II. How to Go Through Trial**

Daniel received grace to persevere with his rejection of worldly Babylon and its food offered to idols. He did all in his power to resist the temptation himself. He did not say, "Now that I have purposed in my heart not to eat with the Babylonians, I shall sit back and wait for the Lord to find a way to have me excused from their presence at mealtimes." Rather, he used means, praying that the Lord might bless them: "Therefore Daniel requested the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself" (v. 8b).

Daniel went to his superior, Ashpenaz, to request what he had purposed in his heart. He was not ashamed to confess his belief — not even to his employer. Can that also be said of us?

Dear friend, when you may say "no" to worldliness — even outwardly — you will experience at times in your life the Lord's favor upon your steadfastness. In Daniel's case, this can be seen already in the following verse: "Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs" (v. 9).

Did you read this verse carefully? *God* brought Daniel into favor — thus the Lord had already gone before him. He was already making things well. It seemed He was already paving the way for Daniel to live out his convictions,

No doubt Daniel himself had hoped his request would be quite easily granted. After all, "if God be for us who can be against us?" But Ashpenaz's answer is a grave disappointment: "And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king" (v. 10).

What a trial! What a mystery! Had not Daniel's request been a matter of prayer? Had it not been motivated by a sincere and earnest desire to avoid sin? Had not God Himself helped Daniel quite pointedly by bringing him into favor with Ashpenaz? And now the answer was "no"!

Daniel's "no" to the spirit of the world received a "no" from the Lord who had seemed to say "yes" before. What now? Must he give up? Must he give in? Our fleshly nature would be prone to say: "Now I can fully indulge; otherwise God would have changed the mind of the prince. I must have been too strict, too

religious, too narrow-minded, too intolerant."

Do you not think that Satan was also active in planting seeds of doubt within Daniel? "Daniel, it was all only pride — religious pride, stubbornness, and legalism. The Lord was not in it. It was only you. You are in Babylon now. Here the God of Israel won't answer your prayers. Here you must compromise with the gods and customs of Babylon."

Are you acquainted with such inner wrestlings of soul? You can believe that Daniel, the young man of prayer, was brought back to prayer through such a disappointment! Do you know times when God's mysterious providences and afflictions sweep over you, such that your soul cries out with him, "Lord, why? Oh God, did I not beg of Thee not to let me go my own way? Now what must I do? Lord, show me Thy will before I succumb to the snares of unbelief."

Do you know something of being driven back to prayer — time and again? You cannot be there too much. Usually, we are far too little in prayer. And when we do pray, how seldom we are brought to truly pray in our prayers!

I believe that there on his knees, looking and praying toward Jerusalem, Daniel received insight from the Lord to know what to do. The Lord directed him to try again — only this time he had to go to the prince's subordinate, Melzar.

"Then said Daniel to Melzar,...prove thy servants I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants" (vv. 11-13).

The first time it was Daniel's plan. This time it was the Lord's. Therefore he received courage to ask for a miraculous ten-day plan in which his life could be at stake if a difference were not to be seen on these four young men after eating common vegetable food for ten days. "As thou seest" after ten days, "deal with thy servants."

"So he consented to them in this matter" (v. 14a). The Lord showed His favor and power in prospering this plan.

Melzar consented! No doubt Daniel was so glad at that moment with what the Lord had done that he forgot about the ten-day trial he was entering. "And he

proved them ten days" (v. 14b).

Now the trial began in earnest. A trial of waiting. What would happen? Would the Lord fulfill His promise? Would He be true to His own Word? Would they all be killed if they did not appear more healthy than the others after ten days?

A ten-day, waiting trial. God's people often experience "waiting trials." Waiting times can become double trials for them when an unfulfilled promise of God is involved. Oh, to be waiting with a divine promise without seeing any signs of fulfillment - what a trial this can be! When God's promises are first received by faith, they are unspeakably precious, but a time can arrive — a time between promise and fulfillment — when these promises, reverently speaking, can be a source of more burden than joy.

Ten days. Ten is often used in Scripture as the number of God's perfect purpose. It is no accident that Daniel had to endure this trial for ten days — not nine or eleven. His "ten-day" trial here serves as a type of the "ten-day trials" that God's people often encounter in the pathway to heaven. When God reaches His perfect purposes with His people in their trials, then the trial is taken away, but not before! Sometimes that calls for trials of only minutes or hours; at other times, it means trials of years or even for the rest of their life. .

The Lord knows best. He makes no mistakes. His trials are always of perfect quality and quantity to serve His eternal and blessed purposes.

In these trials, Daniel and all of God's people must be brought to that blessed place where they must die to themselves and their own righteousness. Together with Daniel, we must come to that place in our trials where the Lord would be righteous and just if there would be no difference after ten days. At that place we confess, "Oh Lord, I am unworthy that Thou shouldst make a difference where there is no difference between myself and the worst of all the Babylonians in Satan's service!"

No doubt Daniel came to truly learn the meaning of his name during those ten days. Daniel means *God is my judge*. He had to learn that man think of Ashpenaz) and self could not be trusted. Hoping against hope, he cast himself and his trial upon the Lord. The Lord was free to judge both his case and himself. The Lord

could do with Daniel what he desired.

Dear friend, this dying to self, this surrender to God and His will, is both trying and sweet. There God's Daniels are cut off from everything of themselves. There all comes to a standstill, and nothing remains but to sigh, "Lord, remember me in Thy mercy; I am unworthy; if I perish, I perish, but then I will perish in prayer to Thee. I will not let Thee go."

How many times Daniel and his three friends, Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, were praying alone and together during those ten days I can't tell you. No doubt they often encouraged and admonished each other to persevere in the way of obedience no matter what Ashpeniaz, Melzar, or any courtier would say. But that too must be cut off — the Lord alone can help; the Lord alone is free and sovereign. In the end, the case was between the Lord and Daniel — yes, even Daniel had to fall out of it. It was between the Lord and His Son. It was the Lord's case.

"He *proved* them." Dear friends, I cannot express in human vocabulary everything contained in this simple yet profound word, *proved*. In the final analysis, the Lord Himself was the one being tried, for Daniel was His child and belonged to His family. .

The Lord shall never disappoint His Son nor His people. The Lord made the difference. "And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat. Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse" (vv. 15-16).

The Lord is faithful! Miraculously He caused a clear distinction in the physical beauty and strength of Daniel and his three friends by means of His special providence.

Spiritually, matters are no different. God's people have food to eat of which worldly people do not know or understand. Ten days of spiritual food will do much for the spiritual beauty and strength of God's people. Too often they are lean and unhealthy, and then have nothing to say. It is all their own fault.

But the Lord comes back. He is the faithful God who plants faith, gives strength

to walk in faith, tries faith, and fulfills His own Word in 1 John 5:4, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

Daniel's life was not easy, but it was blessed. Let us pray for that kind of life — especially you, young people. Pray for a life that remains separate from worldly influences not only in temptation, but also through trial. In trial it takes special grace not to return to the world, but to choose, like Moses, rather "to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." May the Lord grant this good choice to you out of free grace.

Never forget: The Lord does not promise His people an easy life, but He does promise them a blessed life. He shall fulfil Romans 8:28 for them throughout all their trials, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Oh, dear young friend, ask the Lord to come against your natural, fleshly inclinations, in order to teach you the great blessedness of His service! All that is worldly is vanity and temporary; all that is of the Lord is invaluable and shall endure forever.

"Happy is that people, that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD" (Psa.

144:15).

"Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near" (Isa. 55:6).

## APPLICATION

### III. How to Live

We read in the closing verse of Daniel 1: "And Daniel *continued* even unto the first year of king Cyrus\* (v. 21). The first year of King Cyrus was 539 B.C. - nearly seventy years after Daniel was first taken captive. For seventy years Daniel continued to live separately from Babylonian worldliness. Amid all the honor of his exalted position as the king's counsellor, Daniel *continued*. In spite of all the jealousy toward a foreign captive in a coveted office, Daniel *continued*. Through

the insanity of one king and the murder of three of his successors, Daniel continued.

*Daniel continued.* For seventy long years Daniel walked by faith in a foreign land, placed only below the king in authority. Through four earthly kings he continued to trust the King of kings - believing, obeying, and knowing that He who gave the commandment to remain separate would also supply the grace. "He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved" (Ps, 55:22b).

Do you ever read once in the book of Daniel that this great prophet who dared to stand alone regretted his separate lifestyle? The answer is obvious: of course not. But the deeper question must then be asked: Are you, my friend, following his example by grace?

Sometimes when a person lives to be very old you read in the newspaper that he is asked the secret of reaching such an age. Most of the time a foolish, humanistic answer is given. I once read of a man who was asked on his 107th birthday if he ever thought about death.

"No," he replied, "I have a brother who became 120."

Such is the foolishness of man. How seldom we realize that every day of our life we are totally dependent on the longsuffering forbearance of God!

If you could have asked Daniel what the secret was of his becoming nearly ninety years old while still walking a God-fearing life in the midst of a heathen country, he would have had a much different answer. He would have said, "Grace. Free, sovereign grace."

You can read this answer between the lines in Daniel 9. More than fifteen times in this one chapter Daniel confesses his sins and unworthiness.

That Daniel *continued* a separate lifestyle was entirely due to grace. Grace is God's unmerited favor to unworthy sinners, granted for Christ's sake. Grace is:

**G**od's

**R**iches

**A**t

Christ's

Expense

Grace was Daniel's secret from beginning to end. *Preventing grace* kept him from falling into temptations, *accompanying grace* brought him safely and profitably through trials, and following grace pursued him all the days of his life (Ps. 23:6). For more than seventy years Daniel experienced God's comforting declaration to His children: "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Cor. 12:9).

The gracious, eternal love of a Triune God — that was everything for Daniel. He tasted the drawing love of the Father who chose him from eternity. This eternal love enabled Jesus to say of His Father's chosen Daniels: "No one shall pluck them out of My Father's hand." But Daniel also experienced the sustaining love of the Son, who "ever liveth to make intercession for His people (Heb. 7:25). And he was intimately acquainted with the applying love of the eternal Spirit, who enables believers to sing by faith at times:

*Lord, though I walk 'mid troubles sore,  
Thou wilt restore my faltering spirit;  
Though angry foes my soul alarm,  
Thy mighty arm will save and cheer it.  
Yea, Thou wilt finish perfectly  
What Thou for me hast undertaken;  
May not Thy works, in mercy wrought,  
E'er come to naught, or be forsaken.*

"And Daniel continued" — solely because of the Triune Jehovah. He is the great "I AM THAT I AM," who abides eternally the same. Therefore the burning bush which Moses saw was burned with fire but not consumed. As Father, the unchangeable Jehovah lit the burning bush of salvation already from eternity in the Counsel of Peace. The Son fulfilled all the requirements of salvation for the hell-worthy in time by obeying the law perfectly and by enduring the agonies of death — all the while burning with love for His Father and His people. And the Holy Spirit works savingly in the elect, thereby guaranteeing that there shall be a living, burning, but not-consumed church even until the end of the world.

It was not Daniel, not his free will nor his good works, which enabled him to persevere in a God-fearing lifestyle. If God's people, as branches of the living Vine, would have had to be the fuel upon which the continuance of the flame depended, the living church would have been consumed long ago. The tender branches would have withered and died from the heat of God's wrath in a moment. But the Lord Jesus Christ took all the heat upon Himself — the heat of God's wrath, of hellish powers, and of the sins of His people — so that His church could be in the fire and not have a hair of their head singed. Christ walks with His people in the midst of all their burning, fiery furnaces.

In a word, Daniel continued with God because the Triune God continued with Daniel. His name is Jehovah. He is the Unchangeable One: "For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Mal. 3:6).

I would say it even stronger: Daniel continued with God because God cannot but continue with His people, God's continuation with His people is inseparable from His Name, cause, and glory. God's people, God's church are precisely that — God's. Oh, what comfort lies in this for all God's persecuted Daniels! No matter how stoked the fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar may be, and no matter how deep and closed the den of lions may become, the Lord maintains His church and people.

Not that this was always easy for Daniel to believe. No doubt there were times when Daniel cried to the Lord, "Shall I ever continue to the end with all these temptations surrounding me and within me? Oh Lord, I have forfeited everything — also that Thou wouldest continue with me — but Thou canst do it for Thy own Name's sake. Lord, continue with me, though I have made myself unworthy a thousand times."

"And Daniel continued" — it could not be any different. Not one child of God shall be lost.

God was good to Daniel so good, that he was spared to see better days when God's promises were fulfilled. When King Cyrus conquered Babylon, he allowed the people to return to Jerusalem. He allowed Daniel to see Israel's deliverance from captivity before he died.

Young people, there are many lessons to learn from the first chapter of Daniel for all of us, but especially for you. Before we close this service, let me summarize a few of them for you:

(1) Ask for grace to live Daniel's kind of life, a life of separation from the world and in the fear of God. Perhaps you will respond: "But this would be so hard. My friends will despise me. I will be looked upon as old-fashioned and strange. I will be persecuted to no end."

That can all be. But remember, friends who seek to lead you into the world and away from God, are no friends at all. Actually, they are your enemies. And remember too, that the loudest mockers often have the deepest respect underneath. Often they will even show you their respect later — privately. "When a man's ways please the LORD, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Prov. 16:7).

(2) Ask for grace to have a higher regard for what the Lord thinks about you than for what people think of you. Daniel continued in honor with those from whom he had separated himself and in honor with God's people, but most importantly, he continued in the favor of the Lord. "In His favour is life" (Ps. 30:5).

(3) Ask for grace to be faithful, also in little things. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much" (Luke 16:10).

(4) Ask for grace to be courageous, to stand firm for Biblical principles. Ask the Lord to give you what you need to dare to be a Daniel — to dare to stand alone. That is what the future of the church desperately needs also — Joshuas and Daniels who dare to say "no" to sin and "yes" to God.

(5) Ask the Lord to grant you friends who also dare to say "no"— friends like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. When looking for a mate for life, do not look for one who always says "yes." Pray that God may guide you to a partner who has a deep respect for the truth, and yearns to know and walk in the fear of the Lord.

(6) Ask the Lord for a praying life. Bring all your needs to Him. You cannot come too often, nor stay too long at the throne of grace. The Lord says to you, "Acknowledge Me in all thy ways and I shall direct thy paths." Pray above all for

true conversion; do not rest short of a personal, saving acquaintance with Jesus Christ, the only Savior.

(7) Ask for grace to refrain from sin. Don't think you can remain standing in your own strength. Bow your knees every morning and pray: "Lord, give me what I need to avoid temptation as much as possible, but also to remain firm when in the midst of it."

(8) Like Daniel, avoid as much as possible those people, places, and customs which place temptation in your pathway. Instead of the attitude, "How far may I go and still not sin?," ask, "How may I stay as far as possible from sin?"

(9) Search the Word of God. Pray that the Lord might grant you David's precious testimony: "Thy Word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against Thee" (Ps. 119:11).

All of us, young or old, stand on one side or the other. We are ruled either by the childlike fear of God or by the slavish fear of man and self. Are you standing on Daniel's side? Is your life an example like Joseph in the house of Potiphar and Moses in the courts of Pharaoh? Do you know what it is by grace to fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:12)? To "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 2:3)? To put on "the whole armour of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day" (Eph. 6:13)?

Or are you pursuing a lifestyle of compromise with sin — a life of "halting between two opinions" (1 Ki. 18:21), of trying to give God half a heart? Are you trying to live a somewhat religious life while avoiding Christ's command, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" Mat. 16:24)?

Perhaps matters are even worse. Perhaps you are siding totally with the Babylonians. Do you never pick persecution and worldly loss above God's displeasure and a wounded conscience?

Do not forget: Both the compromisers and those who are altogether worldly are on the Babylonian side.

Dear friend, there is no third side — a half-and-half life is the devil's side, too.

On which side are you standing the side of Babylon or the side of Daniel?  
Daniel's side is the only life worth living. By the grace of God, it's how to live.  
AMEN.