

The Faith Of A Fifteen Year Old (1:1-21)

INTRODUCTION

1. The Old Testament is filled with examples worthy of our study and emulation...
 - a. Such as **Joseph**, with his stand for God in the house of Potiphar
 - b. Such as **Joshua**, a great man of faith and conviction in his service to God
2. Another example that ought to inspire us all is that of **Daniel**...
 - a. As a young man, his faith gave him the courage to remain true to his convictions
 - b. As an old man, his faith sustained him the threat of persecution

[We first read of Daniel and his great faith, in the first chapter of the book of Daniel...]

I. DANIEL'S FAITH AS A "FIFTEEN YEAR OLD"

A. IT WAS A BLEAK DAY IN THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL...

1. The beginning of Babylonian domination - **Dan 1:1-2**
 - a. In the third year of Jehoiakim (ca. 605 B.C.)
 - b. Jerusalem besieged by Nebuchadnezzar
 - c. Jehoiakim taken into captivity, and precious items taken from the temple
2. This was the first of three times that Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem (605, 597, 586 B.C.)

B. DANIEL AND OTHERS SELECTED FOR SPECIAL TRAINING...

1. Young men taken to serve Nebuchadnezzar - **Dan 1:3-7**
 - a. They were truly the "cream of the crop" among the captives
 - 1) Good looking with no blemish
 - 2) Gifted with wisdom, knowledge, and the ability to learn quickly
 - b. To serve in the king's palace, and be taught the language and literature of the Chaldeans (Babylonians)
 - 1) Given special provisions of the king's food and drink
 - 2) With three years of special training
 - c. Among those selected, four are named, and apparently renamed to honor Babylonian gods
 - 1) **Daniel** (God is my judge) - **Belteshazzar** (a servant of Bel)
 - 2) **Hananiah** (the Lord is gracious) - **Shadrach** (inspired by the sun god)
 - 3) **Mishael** (who is what God is?) - **Meshach** (who is what the moon god is?)
 - 4) **Azariah** (the Lord helps) - **Abed-Nego** (servant of Nebo)
2. How would these young men respond?
 - a. Would they submit to the temptations placed before them?
 - b. Would they give in, excusing themselves due to youth and inexperience?
-- How would you have reacted if you were in their place?

C. DANIEL MAKES A DECISION...

1. He "purposed in his heart" - **Dan 1:8**
 - a. I.e., he made a commitment
 - b. Something too rarely heard of today, in both young and old
2. His commitment was to "not defile himself" with the king's food

- a. Possibly unclean food according to Levitical restrictions
- b. Or food used in idol worship which would cause one to be a participant with such worship - cf. **1 Co 10:20-22**

D. HOW DANIEL REMAINED TRUE TO HIS COMMITMENT...

1. He did it **with politeness** - **Dan 1:8b**
 - a. Note that "he requested"
 - b. He did not "demand", but respected the authority of those over him
2. He did it **with God's help** - **Dan 1:9**
 - a. God gave him favor in the eyes of the chief of eunuchs
 - b. Similar to how Joseph found favor in prison - cf. **Gen 39:21**
3. He did it **through persistence** - **Dan 1:10-11**
 - a. He did not give up after the refusal by the chief of the eunuchs
 - b. He tried something else, going to the steward directly over them
4. He did it **through willingness to test his faith** - **Dan 1:12-15**
 - a. He was confident that God's way was the right way
 - b. He was willing to demonstrate the superiority of God's way
 - c. So he asked the steward to give him and his three friends just water and vegetables for ten days

E. THE VALUE OF SUCH FAITH SEEN IN ITS RESULTS...

1. It affected the lives of others! - **Dan 1:15-16**
 - a. It had blessed the countenance of Daniel and his friends
 - b. It then blessed the rest of the young men under the care of the steward
2. God blessed Daniel and his three friends even more! - **Dan 1:17-20**
 - a. God gave them knowledge, skill, and wisdom, and to Daniel He gave understanding in visions and dreams
 - b. They became the best of the young men who had been trained, and served in the presence of Nebuchadnezzar
 - c. The king found them better than all his magicians and astrologers
3. Daniel continued in the court of Babylon nearly seventy years! - **Dan 1:21**
 - a. Even to the first year of Cyrus of Persia (539 B.C.)
 - b. Eventually becoming provincial ruler and chief administrator over all others - **Dan 2:48**

[What a wonderful example of faith and commitment, and of God's providence to care for His people! Now let's consider some...]

II. LESSONS AND APPLICATIONS FROM DANIEL'S FAITH

A. HOW TO SUCCEED IN KEEPING OUR COMMITMENT TO THE LORD...

1. **Be polite**
 - a. There is never any reason to be rude or arrogant
 - b. Impoliteness just aggravates a situation rather than helps it - cf. **Pro 15:1**
2. **Seek God's help**
 - a. Without God, any effort is more likely to fall - cf. **Psa 127:1-2**
 - b. God seeks to help those who are loyal to Him - cf. **2 Chr 16:9**
3. **Be persistent**
 - a. Don't give up trying after meeting the first obstacle

- b. Remember what Jesus taught about persistence:
 - 1) Those who keep on "asking, seeking, knocking" will receive, find, have doors opened to them - **Mt 7:7-11**
 - 2) The parable of the persistent widow - **Lk 18:1-8**
- 4. **Be willing to test your faith**
 - a. If not willing, how committed are you to trusting God?
 - b. Yet God often invited people to test His promises - cf. **Mal 3:10**
 - c. And so does Jesus - cf. **Jn 7:16-17; Mt 6:31-34**

B. SOME APPLICATIONS...

- 1. **School-age children**
 - a. Out from underneath their mother's apron for the first time
 - b. They will be faced with making decisions
 - Will they have the faith of Daniel?
- 2. **College-bound students**
 - a. Moving away from home for the first time
 - b. Leaving a spiritual environment at home, for one that is likely very worldly
 - Will they live and act with the same sort of commitment found in Daniel?
- 3. **Adults in the workplace**
 - a. Tempted to accept jobs which may require one to compromise convictions
 - b. Called upon to lie for the boss, show loyalty to the company though illegal or unethical
 - Will they have "the faith of a fifteen year old"?
- 4. **Those with unbelieving spouses**
 - a. Having to serve God and raise their children in the ways of the Lord on their own
 - b. With little or no moral and religious support from their life mate
 - Will they have the "purpose of heart" that Daniel had?

CONCLUSION

- 1. Many other applications could be made, but what have we learned from **"The Faith Of A Fifteen Year Old"** like Daniel?
 - a. Even those who are young need to make a personal commitment to serve the Lord
 - b. One can be steadfast in their purpose to serve the Lord without arrogance
 - c. We should look to the Lord for help, and be willing to trust in His providence
 - d. God will bless and provide for those who put their trust in Him and His will
- 2. **Daniel** is not the only person to demonstrate such faith in his youth...
 - a. We made mention of **Joseph** earlier
 - b. We have other examples in the O.T., such as **David** and **Josiah**
 - c. And of course, let's not forget the example of **Mary** (the mother of Jesus), and that of **Timothy**

May the example of their dedication to the service of the Lord inspire us all to "purpose in our heart" not to defile ourselves by the things of the world!