

Resolved

Daniel 1:8-21

Series: Unshakable | A Study in the Book of Daniel

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Illus. Jonathan Edwards – I was first introduced to the preacher and revivalist, Jonathan Edwards in college. I was in an elective class that studied some of the great preachers in world history and we would look at their lives and try to determine outside of the hand and favor of God of course, what made their preaching ministry so effective.

Edwards was one of THE primary figures in the First Great Awakening when revival spread throughout America in the early to mid 1700's. He was a scholar...the third President of Princeton University and perhaps most well-known for a series of sermons that described a Christian's conversion called *Religious Affections* as well as a sermon he preached entitled, *Sinners in the Hands of An Angry God*.

In this sermon, it was his use of vocabulary and the imagery he used to describe a literal, fiery hell and the wrath of God that awaits the ungodly that so moved the audiences he was speaking to that it's reported people were crying out loud, fainting in the pews, and some even were climbing over pews and people to get to the front of the church to express their desire to be saved.

Now, that's a sermon! Like you don't have to do that this morning if you want to get saved, you'll have an opportunity to just walk down the aisle or go to our connection room! No need to climb over anyone this morning!

As we studied Edwards life though we found something that was extremely formative in his life...you could say in many ways that this made him who he was as a preacher, pastor, scholar and revivalist.

When he was a teenager – 19 years old I believe, he sat down and wrote a series of thoughts down...these would be practices he wanted to implement in his life or just ideas that he wanted to be reminded of – he wrote these down in what he called “Resolutions”. There are 70 of them and according to his own testimony he would read these resolutions at least once a week. He wanted to be constantly reminded of these things that he had resolved to do, think about, or be before God.

Let me give you just a sampling...and I'm telling you just google his resolutions when you get home – they are amazing! This shows you a bit of Edwards mind and motivation – it made him who he was!

Resolved: I will DO whatever I think will be most to God's glory; and my own good, profit and pleasure, for as long as I live. I will do all these things without any consideration of the

time they take...**Resolved to do this, whatever difficulties I encounter, and no matter how many I experience or how severe they may be.**

Resolved: Never to do anything, whether physically or spiritually, except what glorifies God. In fact, I resolve not only to this commitment, but I resolve not to even grieve and gripe about these things...if I can avoid it.

Resolved: Never to do anything which I would be afraid to do if it were the last hour of my life.

Resolved: To study the Scriptures so steadily, and so constantly, and so frequently, that it becomes evident – even obvious – to myself that my knowledge of them has grown.

Resolved: To inquire every night, before I go to bed, whether I have acted in the best way I possibly could, with respect to eating and drinking.

Resolved: Whenever I hear anything spoken in a conversation of any person, if I think what is said of that person would be praiseworthy in me, I will endeavor to imitate it.

Resolved: To confess honestly to myself all that I find in myself – whether weakness or sin. And if it something that concerns my spiritual health, I will also confess the whole case to God, and implore him for all needed help.

Edwards resolved:

- this is how I'm going to live my life...
- these are the things that are MOST important...

And these resolutions along with Scripture served as a filtering system if you will of how he would make decisions. They served as “guardrails” and “guidelines” for how he would live for the entirety of his life.

Today, as we continue in our sermon series *Unshakeable*, we are going to see Daniel resolve to do something that will change the trajectory of his life.

I'm calling the message as you would probably expect by now: **Resolved** (Daniel 1)

By way of context, let me briefly catch those of you that may have missed last week up. I do encourage you to go back and listen to the intro message and any message you miss because these build on one another.

Babylon is the world's superpower at the time. Under the leadership and reign of King Nebuchadnezzar (Nebo), it has advanced conquering countries and kingdoms.

You read (v. 1-7) and part of the conquest in taking over these countries was to exile and deport its people...this was just part of Empire building!

And when Nebo came into Judah, he took back to Babylon with him some of Israel's finest and best (this is where Daniel comes in along with his friends – they were probably around 15 years of age at this time).

Nebo's goal was to reeducate them, assimilate them into Babylon's culture...he wanted to wipe out their identity in any and every way he could.

His desire was to totally brainwash them and cause them to forget what they had known and grown up in - this includes forgetting Yahweh, the God they had been taught to love and serve.

Just read (v. 1-7):

- These young men's name was changed...
- They were enrolled in the State university...
- Many believe serving in the King's court under the chief eunuch, that they themselves were made eunuchs...

Their entire identity was being stripped from them and taken away, and we pick up in (v. 8).

Daniel 1:8-21 – “But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank. Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself. ⁹ And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs, ¹⁰ and the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, “I fear my lord the king, who assigned your food and your drink; for why should he see that you were in worse condition than the youths who are of your own age? So you would endanger my head with the king.” ¹¹ Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, ¹² “Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's food be observed by you, and deal with your servants according to what you see.” ¹⁴ So he listened to them in this matter, and tested them for ten days.”

Now, let me remind you what we said last week about Babylon. I told you that every time you see the word Babylon or think about Babylon as we make our way through this book, you need to have in your mind what all Babylon represents.

I showed you that in parenthesis if you will, this is the words that describe Babylon...this is what Babylon is:

Babylon (lust for power, selfish autonomy, human greed, rampant idolatry, unbridled hedonism)

And the takeaway for us last week was that we are living in Babylon! The same words used to describe Babylon could be used to describe where we are living today.

And here is the deal about Babylon and Satan who is the brains behind the city and activity of Babylon...here is the goal. I'll give it to you in an image

SHOW IMAGE: (Compromise and Conform cycle)

This is what Babylon wants for you and will do its best to force it upon you. Compromise and conform OR conform and compromise. It works both ways! They feed one another!

The more you make small compromises, the more you'll conform to Babylon. The more you conform to Babylon the more compromises you'll make. It's a vicious cycle and if a part of it long enough, you will lose your identity and change into a totally different person than you were when you arrived in Babylon...and that's the goal - change of identity via conform and compromise.

Daniel was wise enough to see this and he makes the decision to put his foot down. He draws a line in the sand on this issue of eating the king's food.

Now, we'll try to determine WHY it was THIS issue that David said, "NOT doing that right there! Like, you can change my name, I'll take the classes you want to enroll me in...I'll even learn the language, but I'm NOT going to eat the king's food!"

But, before doing so, let's take note of the fact that this decision was made sometime BEFORE he was confronted with making this decision!

Daniel "resolved"...some translations use the words, "set his heart"...some use the word "determined". There is actually a little play on words going on here.

A more literal reading of (v. 7-8) reads like this: "And the chief of the eunuchs "determined/set" them names...Daniel he "determined/set" Belteshazzar, Hananiah he "determined/set" Shadrach, Mishael he "determined/set" Meshach, and Azariah he "determined/set" Abednego.

And then (v. 8) – "But Daniel resolved (i.e. determined/set his heart) that he would not defile himself..."

The idea here is, "Nebo can determine and set for me many things, but I'm going to determine and set for me something, and that's I'm not going to defile (contaminate, pollute) myself with the king's food.

Now, most see this decision as having several tentacles...there are several reasons Daniel said, "I'm drawing a line here."

- There's the issue of the food not being kosher. As a young Jewish man, the Old Testament law that was in Daniel's heart, he was not going to negotiate on – there was certain food he simply could not/would not eat.
- There's the issue of that meat that was from the king's table being from a sacrifice that was offered to idols. Again, according the Old Testament law, Daniel knew that was a “no-no” as well.
- Some suggest Daniel's decision here was more symbolic in nature...that eating from the king's table would have been a sign of dependence upon the king instead of dependence upon God and that he simply wasn't willing to go there.

It could have been any of these OR a combination of all these reasons that caused Daniel to purpose in his heart...to resolve that he wasn't going to do it - BUT the reason that makes the most sense to be for him abstaining on this issue is what scholars have referred to as the “defensive view”.

This view states the reason Daniel resolved not to eat from the king's table...that this was the decided hill to die on where he says, “enough is enough” is because he was being suffocated by Babylon.

Commentator, **John Walton** – **“It is not so much something in food that defiles as much as it is the total program of assimilation. At this point the Babylonian government is exercising control over every aspect of their lives. They have little means to resist the forces of assimilation that are controlling them. They seize on one of the few areas where they can still exercise choice (very important) as an opportunity to preserve their distinct identity.”**

It's as if Daniel is stating with this decision, “You can put me in Babylon, but you can't put Babylon in me!”

There's a real sense that Daniel and his friends were probably talking about all this amongst themselves and had made up their minds that if we go here...if we eat this food...it could be all over for us...we'll be pass the point of no return as it relates to staying true in some form to our God, so on this issue, we're taking a stand. We're RESOLVED.

A word I would use for this decision they are making here is the word: **Conviction**

The word “conviction” means a firmly held belief. Webster's defines it as “a strong persuasion or belief”.

Daniel and his friends had some convictions. And when someone has convictions and then **CHOOSES** to live by their convictions you better watch out because you're not moving them!

Conviction is like concrete in the soul. Conviction is like an anchor that prevents a boat from drifting. See:

- People with convictions don't allow the opinions of others to sway them...

- People with convictions don't allow the "come and go" feelings and emotions they may be experiencing in a given moment affect their decision-making...
- People with convictions don't allow circumstances to weaken their belief or resolve...
- People with convictions refuse to rationalize or make excuses as to why they believe what they believe...

As one author I read put it: **"Conviction is not merely an opinion. It is something rooted so deeply in the conscience that to change a conviction would be to change the very essence of who you are."**

Daniel had a conviction, and he wasn't about to be moved on it!

James Freeman Clarke was an American pastor in the 1800's and was strong abolitionist. In fact, it was his abolitionist views that led him to start a movement of churches that referred to themselves as "The Church of the Disciples" – one of their three stated founding principles was that all its seats in the church were "free seats" – meaning anyone of any color could come and worship.

He said: **"Strong convictions precede great actions".**

This is certainly true in Daniel's case. His strong convictions are what led to this "line in the sand".

Now, I'm not going to stay here long...can't because of time, but will you just consider for a moment what led to Daniel having this deep-rooted conviction? How did this conviction come to being formed in his heart?

Very quickly, let me propose to you three ways it happened:

1. Godly parents

Now, we don't know anything about Daniel (let's just take him) parents. We do know they named him Daniel which means "God is my Judge". Even in his name, they were teaching him that he ultimately was accountable and answered to his God.

If he was 15 when was exiled, and exiled in 605 BC, then that means he was born and grew up sometime around 620 BC. You trace Israel's history, and do you know who was ruling as King of Judah during his childhood? King Josiah!

And King Josiah was one of Judah's greatest kings! In fact, listen to how he is described in **2 Kings 23:25** – **"Before him there was no king like him, who turned to the Lord with all his**

heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses, nor did any like him arise after him.”

You know why he’s described this way? Because as King, he repaired the Temple that was pretty much in ruins because of previous leadership, and as they were repairing it, they found the Book of Law – ie. They found the Bible!

And when they brought it to the King and read it to him, he realized they weren’t following anything that God had told them to do!

So he repented, led the people to repent, brought all sorts of reforms to Judah:

- ordering them to tear down idols...
- burn vessels that were dedicated to false gods that had been left in the Temple...
- he brought back Passover in Jerusalem!

In other words, Daniel and especially Daniel’s parents grew up during a national revival...a spiritual awakening in many ways. This no question would have affected and influenced the way they raised Daniel.

You had godly parents by all likelihood. Daniel would have grown up at least in those young, formative years (6-10 years old) seeing the Temple worship...hearing the Word of God be read. This leads to a second contributing factor for how Daniel’s convictions were formed.

2. Biblical community

The Jewish faith is a communal faith. They worshipped together. They celebrated Passover together. The Temple life was a community of faith. We see this community staying together in these four friends even when they are in Babylon.

Surely, they were talking to one another about what they were going through...praying with one another...holding each other accountable...reminding each other of their faith. They knew the power of what I would call today true, Christian friendship!

A third contributing factor that I would add to this list of what formed Daniel’s convictions would be:

3. The Scripture

Daniel’s name came from scripture. The way they were taught to worship came from scripture. Daniel and his friends as good Jewish boys were taught to pray the Shema! Most had the law of God memorized before they were 12. These boys knew Scripture! Now, you put this all together and you can see where their convictions were formed! They grew up in godly homes, experienced biblical community and knew the Scripture.

Can I just build an interpretative/applicational bridge to today's world and tell you that if we are going to have young men and women that know how to stay strong in Babylon and live by their convictions it will only happen if we have godly parents, bringing our children up in the church and filling them up with the Word of God!

Listen to me...we have a world that wants this...is trying to enforce this (**SHOW Compromise/Conform cycle**) – this is Babylon!

And the **ONLY** way we prevent this is by raising a generation that stands firm in their convictions. Where are those convictions going to come from?

- They have to come from a mom and dad who loves the Lord and is following him! Mom and dad, you've GOT to lead the way in walking with Jesus! You're the example!
- The convictions must come from a biblical community (i.e. the church) – this is where you hear God's Word that reinforces what the home is teaching...it's where you get good and godly friends who will stand strong with you.
- And we've got to submerge ourselves and our children in the Scripture so that they don't drown in the pleasures Babylon offers! (children's ministry)

This is why you can't afford to miss your quiet time and growing in God's Word. This is why you don't need to miss church! Small compromises lead to conforming to the world and you miss enough, you'll miss your target!

Illus. Airplane travel – Pilots know if you are ONE degree OFF in your coordinates, the results can be devastating. If one is traveling by air from San Francisco to Los Angeles, and you're just ONE degree off, you'll be off by 6 miles by the time you're supposed to be there. If you were trying to get from San Francisco to Washington, D.C., you'd end up on the other side of Baltimore, 42.6 miles away. Just by being off one degree!

Don't compromise and conform...get out of that cycle! Instead get on this cycle! (**SHOW Image Conviction and Courage**)

See, this is where Daniel was! He had convictions, but he also had the courage to live by those convictions. And conviction and courage like compromise and conformity live off and feed off one another!

We'll see in this study in Daniel...I think **THIS** choice Daniel made...and we do have a choice.

In fact, I'd put it like this (**SHOW BOTH IMAGES**) fed future decision-making in Daniel's life. It was this first choice made via courage and conviction that set up future choices he would make.

Daniel saw how God honored his choice...I believe Daniel – just what he felt in living by courage and conviction...I think it stayed with him all his days...influenced him all his days AS we'll see in the coming weeks.

God did honor Daniel and his friends! Look what happened!

Daniel 1:15 – “At the end of ten days (test – just 10 days! The chief eunuch and his steward were terrified. If this doesn't work, it was going to be their head (v. 10) – that's how Nebo ran things! You 've heard of a “hands on” manager, he was a “heads off” type of manager – dude was a loose cannon! Cf 2 Kings 25 King Zedekiah, ch. 3 fiery furnace. God MUST come through...and he does!) **it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's food.”**

How amazing is that?! Poor guy goes on his diet and is fatter than those guys eating meat...that would be my luck on the Daniel diet! I'd be eating vegetables and be getting nothing but fatter and meaner...I'd be angry all the time!

Daniel 1:16-21 – “So the steward took away their food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables. ¹⁷ As for these four youths, God gave them (last week...when in Babylon remember God's sovereignty, God is in control! He's behind everything going on!) **learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. ¹⁸ At the end of the time, when the king had commanded that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ And the king spoke with them, and among all of them none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Therefore they stood before the king. ²⁰ And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom. ²¹ And Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus.”**

Look at what God did! He honored Daniel's courage and standing by his convictions and he blessed him:

- Socially (v. 9) – he gave them favor and compassion with those who were in charge over them...
- Physically (v. 15) – Daniel and his buds looked better than all the others...
- Spiritually (v. 17) – God gave them understanding in visions and dreams. We'll see this gift come in handy bigtime next week...
- Mentally (v. 20) – they were 10x better in every matter of wisdom and understanding...
- Professionally (v. 21) – Daniel served in the king's court until the first year of King Cyrus...that's 70 years from the time he arrived in Babylon...

Talk about blessing and influence. I've got to read you this quote I found this week in my study.

It's by **John MacArthur** – **“His integrity and uncompromising character had far-reaching results, for when I see the wise men coming from the East, I think of the impact Daniel's theology must have had upon the Chaldeans' astrology. God gave him the influence that I believe led to the decree of Cyrus to send people back to their land...influence that led to the rebuilding of the wall under Nehemiah and to the reestablishing of the nation of Israel...influence that eventually led the wise men to come to crown the King who was born in Bethlehem. Daniel was behind the scenes of the history of the Messiah as well as the Messiah's people.”**

I think that entire idea is just AWESOME. And it's all happened because Daniel made a choice! He made a choice to live by courage and conviction rather than to conform and compromise
(SHOW IMAGE OF BOTH)

He resolved... and in closing application for today, let's be like Jonathan Edwards, who was like Daniel and RESOLVE to do some things today.

I'll fly through these:

1. Resolve to not make small compromises

Small compromises are like hidden fault lines...those fault lines shift little by little and then a major earthquake occurs. I pray often, “Lord, don't let there be any chink in my armor. Don't give the Devil an inch. We are in Babylon, let's not let Babylon in us!

2. Resolve to grow in and live by our convictions

We saw that convictions come by way of the Scripture. Let's decide to give ourselves to God's Word and to grow deep in our convictions and we decide BEFORE we're confronted by the test...we decide BEFORE we are tempted that we are going to live out our convictions.

3. Resolve to be courageous

Courageous people inspire others. Once we know our convictions, let's not be afraid to draw a line in the sand. This doesn't mean that we're jerks!

Notice how winsome Daniel was as he made his request to not eat from the king's table. He wasn't angry. He wasn't bent out of shape. There was grace...there was kindness...the word I think of here is meekness. It was a bridled strength.

4. Resolve to trust God with the consequences of living this way

It wasn't guaranteed that it was going to work out the way that it did. God blessed their obedience and their courage, and their faith and it worked out in their favor...but sometimes

when we have courage and live by our convictions, AS we will see in the coming chapters, you get thrown into the fire...you get cast into the Lion's den.

Following the Lord doesn't mean it's always going to be safe and play out in our favor. We resolve...we have courage and conviction and then we trust God with the consequences knowing that even if it doesn't work out like we'd like, even if his blessing and favor simply means we have his presence WITH us AS we DIE, then to him be the glory. We will trust him.

Let's RESOLVE today and choose to live by courage and conviction over conformity and compromise.

Will you pray with me?

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