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0. Introduction

- Connect: new environment – new temptations
- Q: How did Daniel & friends do so well? A: God's Favor and Their Faith

1. God's Favor on Daniel and his 3 friends

- God is the source, He is primary, He is the reason the prospered

2. Daniel & friend's Faith in Temptations

2.1 Worldliness - to be shaped by the world (v. 8-16) (Eating)

- their temptations, how they overcame
- our temptations, how we are called to overcome

2.2 Knowledge: *Worldly* wisdom & knowledge (v. 17) (Education)

- their temptations, how they overcame
- our temptations, how we are called to overcome

2.3 Power: Power and Pride (v. 18 – 21) (Exaltation)

- their temptations, how they overcame
- our temptations, how we are called to overcome

3. Conclusion: Jesus Christ, the one who turned away from all temptations (Favor and Faith)

- Jesus turned away from all temptations, as our most excellent example and in our place, for what we cannot do on our own.
- We turn to Him, not to Daniel
- He is able to help us and gives grace and mercy
- Walk and live in faith, turning from temptations, looking to God's favor.

0. Introduction

Many of us have experienced coming to a new place to live.

- For some of you, it was coming from Vietnam to America.

- For some of you, it was moving away from home to go to college or university.

- For some of you, it was moving to a new neighborhood, school, or job.

- The circumstances may all be different, but one thing that is common in coming to a new place is that there are new temptations (as well as old) that we face.

Context: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah: New place! They faced many temptations.

Exile (God's punishment), first wave (of 3), royalty and nobility taken away to be trained and serve the king of Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar) as officials.

v. 20 – 21 Daniel & Friends Exalted: at the end of the chapter, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah are found to be 10 times better than all the advisers to the king, and served the king (and kings following) for the duration of the exile.

Q: How did this come to be? How did Daniel and his friends do so well, prosper, thrive?

A: 1. God's Favor and 2. Their Faith.

1. God's Favor on Daniel and his 3 friends

Favor in:

- v. 4, 8: their upbringing – they had strong firm faith as they came into Babylon as exiles.

- v. 6: in preserving them – they survived!

- v. 9: in giving them favor and compassion with their authorities – Ashpenaz, the steward, the King

- v. 17: in granting them great wisdom – “learning and skill in all literature and wisdom”, and for Daniel “understanding in visions and dreams”

- God is the *source* of all favor, grace, mercy. He is the giver of all good gifts. He is Sovereign, and “works all things for the good of those who love Him”.

- God is the primary and first reason Daniel and his friends were able to thrive in Babylon. He provided, He protected, He gave.

- For us, we should look to God as our source of all, and live in thanksgiving. He is our provider and protector.

- (transition): The second reason Daniel and his friends did so well was that they stood firm in their faith, at all times and especially in times of temptations:

2. Daniel & friend's Faith in Temptations

Many temptations!

- Three main temptations that face Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah in this passage:

Worldliness, Knowledge, and Power.

2.1 Worldliness - to be shaped by the world (v. 8-16) (Eating)

The temptation for them was:

- **to be shaped/conformed to their new world, the worldly word.**

Romans 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

1 John 2:15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

The goal of the Babylonians was to conform them, to assimilate them.

- They took the best people of the country and placed them in a training school, so that they would serve the king.

- They trained them in literature and in language.

- They gave them their food to eat and their wine to drink.

- They wanted them to become comfortable, satisfied, and adopt Babylonian Citizenship.

- They changed their names: this is one of the strongest ways we see their push to assimilate.

Their Hebrew names all had reference to God. The names that the Babylonians gave them all referred to Babylonian gods.

- v. 8 Daniel *resolved* that he would not defile himself with the king's food and drink.

- This was not so much a question of eating clean or unclean food, but more about resisting the temptation to:

- have the comforts of the king, rather than having comfort in God

- see the king as his provider, rather than God as his provider

- become Babylonian in all parts of life rather than an Israelite, a son of God.

- v. 8 – 9 Daniel went to the chief and the steward in faith: he could easily have been thrown in prison or worse, and when first rejected he persisted, speaking to the steward. He proposed the test in faith, trusting that God would care for them even with the diet of vegetables and water.

- Daniel and friends were faithful in this, and God was faithful to preserve them.

- Daniel conquered this temptation by the grace of God and by being resolved in his faith not to be conformed to the world.

The temptation for us is:

- In our day: a great many temptations, in which we are tempted to cast away our Christian identity and take on the identity of the world

- we are tempted to seek comfort, rather than standing firm in our Christian faith.

- For example: LGBTQ issues, Vietnamese weddings/funerals/events (unbelieving family members), to cheat in business or school,

- Babylon still around today (in the NT referred to in Revelation, judged in the final judgment), tempting us to become like it.

- Face these temptations as Daniel did, with *resolve* not to be conformed to this world, trusting in our good and gracious God.

2.2 Knowledge: *Worldly wisdom & knowledge* (v. 17) (Education)

The temptation for them was:

- to take on and take pride in the wisdom of the world.
- There was also a temptation to turn away from all this learning and reject it all. “Just me and my Bible”, science/learning is bad! (monasticism, fundamentalism)

- Daniel and his friends were in a kind of university, learning the literature and the language of Babylon, of the Chaldeans.
- God granted them skill, knowledge, understanding, they learned very well.
- They learned all the things of the Babylonians.

- Daniel and friends did not fall to the temptation to either turn away in a fundamentalist sense, or to adopt all the ways of the world
- God gave him wisdom and knowledge in both natural and the supernatural.
- Daniel and friends were tempted to:
 - learn and accept as good all of the Babylonian teaching, rather than learn and only accept what is acceptable to God. (Astronomy vs Astrology, Fortune Telling and Magic)
 - turn away from all learning, rather than seeking after good learning
 - learning only the ‘natural’ and forgetting the supernatural
 - become prideful in their knowledge, rather than giving God the glory for the knowledge they attained. *“knowledge puffs up” (1 Cor 8:1)*
- Daniel and friends overcame these temptations by being humble, learning well, serving the Babylonians. They did this from a position of faith, trusting God as their guide and following His will.

The Temptation for us is:

- chase after and learn all the ways and ‘wisdom’ of the world.
- rejecting science, the wisdom of the world. (fundamentalism)

- claim our wisdom as our own, taking pride in ourselves, rather than Giving God the glory

- This is very prevalent in education (grade school and university), but whether young or old, we learn all the time.

- Many go to university, and swayed by the learning of the world, walk away from the faith.

- We must not fall to these temptations. Stand in faith, learn well, test all things, hold fast to what is good (by God's standard). Be humble and give God the glory. Serve the world with the knowledge that you have.

2.3 Power: Power and Pride (v. 18 – 21) (Exaltation)

The temptation for them was:

- pride and abuse of their power

- Daniel and Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah finished their studies, and came before the king to be tested.

- *“none was found like them”*

- *“in every matter ... they were ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters”.*

- they were top of the class, valedictorians.

- So they served the king. In chapter two of Daniel, they get elevated to positions of power.

- v. 21 shows us that Daniel was in this position for a very long time, the whole exile (70 years)

- again, this was because of God.

But they were tempted to:

- take pride in their exaltation/position rather than humbly serving in the position that God placed them in

- abuse their power for their own good or for those close to them.

- When we read further in Daniel, we see that they passed these temptations, by

remaining humble, giving credit to God, and serving in their position rather than abusing their positions. They looked to God as their source.

The Temptation for us is:

- winning feels good. Being good, or the best, feels good. But there is a lot of temptation!

- Perhaps you are in a high position, maybe you're a boss, or you have received a promotion at work.

- Or you're a mother / father / grand parent. (Eph 5 & 6): high positions.

- *Many* who have been in high positions have taken great falls.

- all of these things are good, but there are temptations, the same temptations that Daniel and friends faced. They looked to God in faith. They were faithful to God and to their authorities.

- We too must remain humble in whatever position we are in, serve in that position. When we become skilled, exalted, promoted, when we win, be on guard against the temptations of power and pride.

3. Conclusion: Jesus Christ, the one who turned away from all temptations (Favor and Faith)

- Daniel and his three friends came into a new world and faced great difficulties and temptations. They all did exceedingly well. They are excellent examples to follow.

- Not only did they overcome temptations in their new environment, they came already with a firm and steadfast faith, which means that they faced and overcame temptations in their old environment too.

- But they are in the end, fallen men, and they were not perfect. They are excellent examples but not the most excellent:

- Jesus Christ also came to "a new world" a place foreign to Him (in comparison to Heaven),

- Jesus, just like Daniel, faced many temptations, for *He was tempted in every way, as we are... and yet He was without sin. (Heb 4:15)*
- Daniel was an excellent example to us, Daniel looked to God as his refuge, rock, and salvation, and he lived in and from this faith, turning away from the temptations of worldliness, worldly wisdom, pride, and power.
- Jesus Christ faced all temptations and conquered them all, as our example, for we do follow Him.
- More than this, Jesus Christ conquered all temptations in our place, for we could not and cannot overcome every temptation perfectly. He is able to help us and we receive mercy and grace from Him, when we face temptations and when we fall to temptations. (*Heb 2:17-18, 4:15-67*)
- Do you face temptations? Pray! Do you fail, and fall in to sin? Pray! Are you today not a believer, but you see that you too fall to temptation and sin? Believe in Jesus, Pray to Him, for the forgiveness of your sins, power to overcome temptations, and life eternal.
- Our Savior is not Daniel, He is Jesus Christ. God has looked on us in favor and given us grace and mercy in Christ Jesus.
- May we walk and live in faith, following Jesus, turning from every temptation, turning to Him when we do fall to temptation, and thrive and prosper by God's good favor and providence.