

Message #1059
Rev. Jack C. Longley

"HANG IN THERE EVEN WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH!"

{Daniel 1:8}

Trinity Presbyterian Church

June 27, 2004

INTRODUCTION

Our granddaughter, Tara, was selected with twenty-two other students from Oak Grove High School to spend five weeks in Europe. She flew to Frankfurt, Germany, on Sunday, June 13th, and by the time she landed the next evening she had a case of the 24-hour flu forcing her to miss some of the first day's activities including a cruise down the Rhine River.

She's now residing with a family in Brilon where she is spending two weeks attending school and touring the area. From there she will visit Berlin, Vienna, Salzburg, Munich, Venice, Interlaken, and Paris before returning to Frankfurt for the flight home on the 19th of July.

How great to get away from home!

What a privilege to visit other countries and cultures!

It also can be a time when a persons' values are tested!

When their faith is put to the test

When a person is challenged to conform and compromise what they believe.

Being away from the familiar environment of home presents a plethora of challenges--especially for young people!

We read in the New Testament of a young man who received a large inheritance and went off to a "far country" to sow his wild oats.

...it was a disaster--he couldn't handle his freedom! {as is so often the case}

...he wasted his fortune--blew it all

...ended up in a pig pen {literally}

Unfortunately, that story has been repeated over and over through the centuries.

...young people from wonderful homes go off to attend college, university, or enter the military

...for the first time they're challenged without having mom/dad there to support them--they on their own

...they live in coed dorms

...party life is rampant

...drugs and alcohol are everywhere

...premarital sex is acceptable and considered the norm

...values are challenged

...and mom/dad aren't waiting at the door each night or setting curfews

...it's a real test of values

...all too frequently, what appeared to be freedom ends up in bondage!

DANIEL'S CHALLENGE

In our text of the morning, Daniel and his three friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah {later renamed Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego} were abruptly uprooted from their country and taken by King Nebuchadnezzar to his royal palace in Babylon. These were extremely sharp young men...

...the cream of the crop

...intelligent

...athletic

...quick learners
...handsome
...from privileged families
...devoutly religious
...well bred and cultured young men

And remember, these young men were alone in a strange land--hand picked by King Nebuchadnezzar to receive special privileges.

They were to be groomed and educated for three years...

...trained in culture and language of the Babylonians

...equipped to become leaders

They were fed from the king's table--filet mignon, caviar, and the finest of wines.

Only the rich had such a magnificent menu.

...how could life be better?

...how could anyone want more?

...and how could/would anyone resist?

...who could/would complain?

DANIEL--A MAN OF PURPOSE

One of the first things Nebuchadnezzar did to Daniel and his friends was to give them Babylonian names--an attempt to change their religious loyalty from the God of Judah to the Babylonian gods.

...you can change a person's name; however, you cannot change their heart if they are people of conviction

...those who know what they believe and why

...those who refuse to compromise what they believe--no matter what the cost

...those who KNOW what REALLY matters in life!

It might appear that Daniel {and his friends} were not courteous to their host by requesting a vegetarian diet with only water to drink rather than partaking of the king's delicacies.

But, Israelites considered food from Nebuchadnezzar's table to be contaminated because the first portion of it was offered to idols.

...a portion of the wine was always poured out on a pagan altar

...ceremonially unclean animals were used and were not slaughtered nor prepared to the regulations of the law

...plus certain foods--like pork--were forbidden

The real question here is whether to conform or stand true to their convictions!

Daniel found himself in a culture that did not honor his God; however, he **RESOLVED IN HIS HEART** to remain true and was committed **NOT** to defile himself and compromise his faith. God honors this type of faith and commitment!

CONCLUSION/APPLICATION

Daniel courageously approaches the king's official. He pleads for a ten day trial. His appeal was convincing and the scripture says-- "At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who at the royal food...God gave them knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning...and {three years later} the king found none equal to them...and he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom!"

It has been said, "The person who stands for nothing falls for everything!"

Daniel took his stand...and God blessed him for it!

Our choir sang last Sunday...

"You are my strength when I am weak, You are the treasure that I seek;

You are my all in all. Seeking You as a precious jewel, Lord, to give up, I'd be a fool;

You are my all in all.

Taking my sin, my cross, my shame, rising again I bless Your name; You are my all in all. When I fall down, You pick me up; when I am dry, You fill my cup; You are my all in all.

Jesus, Lamb of God, worthy is Your name! Jesus, Lamb of God, worthy is Your name!"

Make sure your commitment to Christ is solid now...then, when facing challenges in the future you have a sure foundation!

And, remember this...the Bible says...

"The temptations that come into your life are no different from what others experience. God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it. When are are tempted, He will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it!" {I Corinthians 10:13}

Dare to be like Daniel--learn the power of one word...'NO'!