

“Faithful Living in an Unfaithful World”

Special Presentation

Daniel 1:1-21

Clay Joseph

August 20, 2021

Clay: I guess I’ll just start off introducing myself. My name is Clay Joseph. I grew up on the north side of Atlanta for most of my life until college, when I went to Geneva College for four years. That’s where I graduated. That’s where I met a wonderful young lady named Hannah. And after college I stuck around Beaver Falls for two years. She went up to do grad school at Perdue University in Indiana. And during that time we started dating, and then got married two years ago. And right after we got married we moved out to southern California, where I started attending Westminster Seminary California, where Michael Horton is, if you guys know that name, or some other related scholars there. So I’ve been there studying for two years, and I’m just about to leave here in a couple weeks to go finish my third and final year.

Right now my wife is back there. She started work a couple weeks ago; I’m flying solo. So if I seem discouraged or my shoulders are slumped it’s because I miss my sweet bride. *(Laughter)* But it’s neat to be with you to open God’s word together. I am not Jeff. It’s like John the Baptist: I am not the Christ. *(Laughter)* I am not Jeff, and I am not doing Romans. *(Laughter)* But Jeff—Yes?

Dick Clouser: How did you hook up with Jeff?

Clay: Yes. So my wife Hannah grew up here in this area. Her dad was a teacher at Duquesne for 25 years. And so her dad is an elder at Jeff’s church. She grew up in Jeff’s church. And so when we were looking for a good internship opportunity we thought this would be a really good fit. And it has been wonderful; I’ve been really well served there. Good question; thank you.

Ted Wood: Isn’t Westminster Seminary in California an oxymoron?

Clay: Well, I don’t know; it is West. *(Laughter)*

Ted: That’s great. *(Laughter)*

Clay: Don?

Don Maurer: Is Jeff’s church the church you attend?

Clay: Yes, that’s where I’m serving this summer, Jeff’s church. I’ve been going there all summer; yes. And I have just a little more than a week left here. So I’d be happy to tell you more about my life and my story. But I think now would probably be a good time to get started with our study as we look at Daniel chapter 1. Don, would you mind reading the whole chapter for us?

Don: Sure.

Clay: And then I’ll open up with prayer.

Don: Okay. *“In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the LORD gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the articles of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the articles into the treasure house of his god.”*

“Faithful Living in an Unfaithful World”

“Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king’s descendants and some of the nobles, young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king’s palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans. And the king appointed for them a daily provision of the king’s delicacies and of the wine which he drank, and three years of training for them, so that at the end of that time they might serve before the king.

“Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. To them the chief of the eunuchs gave names: he gave Daniel the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abed-Nego. But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

“Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs. And the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, ‘I fear my lord the king, who has appointed your food and drink. For why should he see your faces looking worse than the young men who are your age? Then you would endanger my head before the king.’

“So Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, ‘Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then let our appearance be examined before you, and the appearance of the young men who eat the portion of the king’s delicacies; and as you see fit, so deal with your servants.’ So he consented with them in this matter, and tested them ten days.

“And at the end of ten days their features appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king’s delicacies. Thus the steward took away their portion of delicacies and the wine that they were to drink, and gave them vegetables. As for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom; and Daniel had all understanding in visions and dreams.

“Now at the end of the days, when the king had said that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. Then the king interviewed them, and among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they served before the king. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm. Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus.” This is the word of the Lord.

Brave Men: Thanks be to God.

Clay: All right; let me open us up in prayer. Father in heaven, we do thank You for Your word, for Your good Word to us, for Your authority afforded to us. It is a light to our feet, and it guides us in how we might live and how we might worship and know You more. So bless us in that endeavor today as we seek to know Your word and as we seek to know You more, so that we might worship You more with all our hearts. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

“Faithful Living in an Unfaithful World”

Brave Men: Amen.

Clay: All right. So we are in the Exile. And I thought it would be helpful to give just kind of an introduction to where we are at the Exile. And I think that in view of that I will just survey the history of Israel up to this point. So I'll try to do that in two minutes.

So you start in Genesis 12 with Abraham. And that's really where the history starts, with father Abraham. You know, he's in Ur of the Chaldeans. And he gets called out and he goes up to Haran, comes down to Israel, wanders around a little bit. Eventually his sons go down to Egypt with Jacob and the twelve tribes. And then they multiply in Egypt for several hundred years.

And then you have the great Exodus with Moses. And then you have the giving of the law. And really with the giving of the law you establish these people as a nation and constitute them as a nation. And then Moses takes them up through the wilderness and goes right up to the border of the Promised Land. But Moses doesn't enter in, and then he hands the reigns over to Joshua. Joshua goes and they possess the Promised Land. Then after that they almost possess all of the Promised Land. They have judges. And you can kind of tell that they've gotten themselves into trouble by not finishing the process.

Then you have the king. They want a king. So they ask for Saul and he's a failure. And then David comes along. Then the monarchy is established. Then Solomon comes along and builds the temple.

And at that point they're very much saying, “Okay, good; now we're here. Now we're in Israel.” You have that great line; I think 1 Kings is where it is. Under Solomon's reign everyone had peace and safety from Dan which is way up north to Beer-Sheba which is way down south. And everyone lived under his own vine and fig tree. That's just kind of like good stuff. That's what every Israelite likes to hear. And then from there on out they feel like they kind of have it. And they're living in the land and trying to expand and trying to grow.

And as we know from reading Scripture, they're kind of falling away. but they're just kind of oblivious to that. They're not listening to any of the prophets who were calling out for repentance. So as far as they're concerned, they're partying in the land. They're having a grand old time. They feel like they're blessed by God; they're God's chosen people.

And then the Exile happens. And for most of Israel it's kind of like “The Record Scratch”—the '80s movie with the disco dance party. And then the police walk in and the d.j. stops and everyone stops dancing. And the music is killed and the party's over. And that's kind of where we're at.

And really Daniel goes back to Babylon. You get this feeling of “we are back to square one,” because remember, at the beginning of the story that I just told you, where is Abraham being called out of? He's being called out of Ur of the Chaldeans. Those are the Babylonians. And so now we're going back to the land of the Chaldeans. They're learning the language of the Chaldeans.

It's kind of like the reverse of what Abraham was called to do. He was called to leave the land and to learn a new language, and to leave the gods. And now we're going back to the descendants of Abraham, going all the way back to square one.

“Faithful Living in an Unfaithful World”

One author wrote this. He said that the Exile pretty much seemed to erase all the progress that had been made in redemptive history thus far. It’s very much like what just happened. And so as we get into this story I want that to be the background. And I want us to think for a few minutes right now what types of questions you would expect Daniel or Daniel’s contemporaries in Babylon—the exiles—what kinds of questions do you think they’re asking or wrestling with right now? What are the issues that they’re really having a hard time coming to grips with? I’ll just open that up to you now and ask you guys. Yes?

Brave Man: Has God abandoned us?

Clay: Yes. Has God abandoned us? Where is God? That’s a huge question that they’re asking. Anything else?

Ted: Is the Lord really God?

Clay: Yeah. Is the Lord God?

Ted: Maybe these other gods are greater than our God.

Clay: For sure. Maybe it’s not where is God? But our God just got beat. And maybe we shouldn’t worship our God in the first place. He’s not the God. So that is certainly a good question.

Bishop Rodgers: How can I sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?

Clay: Excellent point. Psalm 137 verse 4: “By Babylon’s rivers we wept. And our Babylonian tormentors are saying, OH, sing us a song!” And the Israelites are saying, “How am I supposed to sing a song to the Lord in a foreign land?” That’s a devastating question. Yes?

Don Rimbey: How are we to worship without any temple?

Clay: Yes. How are we supposed to worship God if the temple is way back there in a suspect condition? We have no vessels. I can’t remember what translation you had. No articles from the temple—for sure.

Don Maurer: I have the New King James.

Clay: Any other questions? I think that’s it. You can really boil it down to where is God, or even who is God? Either He has abandoned us or He’s not who we thought He was. And then to summarize the other category of how should we live? How should we worship? How should we interact with these people? How are we supposed to sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land? Don?

Don Maurer: I taught this section. I actually taught Daniel 3, but I gave background with this particular section. And I asked the people who I was teaching in Sunday school to imagine what it would be like if Afghanistan, since that’s in the news,--

Clay: Mm-hmm.

Don: Or a foreign power took over our country. We would have to wrestle with these questions if they took away our Bibles in our churches, or if they took away the other articles that we would use to worship for the Lord’s Supper or Baptism, or whatever? They would try to convert the churches into museums or something.

Clay: Sure. It’s really helpful to think about that. Caleb taught last week, and his son Noah often has to come too. If I had Noah here I’d use him as an example. And Daniel is probably very, very young here. With these young lads we obviously probably don’t

“Faithful Living in an Unfaithful World”

know exactly how old they were. But most people say that they’re probably between eight and fourteen. I mean, once you get past that it’s possible, but unlikely. And so these are young lads. And they’re just getting ripped out of their land. And they’re getting drafted into Babylon University or Babylon Seminary. They’re saying, “All right. No more Bible. You have a new textbook, a new language—new, new, new.”

And that really moves us into that first point, where I say that in this disaster we’ve kind of introduced ourselves to this situation. And then we have in verses 1-7 a disaster. And for the Israelites everything has gone wrong. Not only is the city conquered and besieged, but the temple is defiled. You know, when you take some articles back from one temple and put them in your own temple you’re saying that your God is humiliated, and my god has conquered. And so that’s what happens here.

Then you get these young lads who come in, totally relocated out of the Promised Land, re-educated into Babylon Seminary, and renamed. And that’s the end of that section there.

And really, I want you guys to hear the beginning of the answer to the questions. You know, the very first question that we came up with—where is God? Who is God? And even that section starts to answer that question.

It really starts in verse 2. In verse 2 it says that God gave Jehoiakim over to Nebuchadnezzar, along with the vessels or along with the artifacts. Right there is an assertion from Daniel that “God put you here, and that it was God’s plan and will for you to be exiled.”

And He accomplished that purpose. Nebuchadnezzar was the means. But God is the One who’s in control. He is the One who’s doing it. And that’s the thesis of the book of Daniel. The book of Daniel says that despite circumstances God is in control. There you go; that’s Daniel summed up. And that’s what you get in verse 2.

But as we continue to look at that I want you to see that the names of Daniel and his friends are important because they tell you about characteristics of God that Daniel wants you to know and wants you to affirm. So Daniel’s name means “God is my Judge.” And so God is just. You guys might be familiar with the name Michael—“who is like God?”—Micha-El; Elohim. Mishael, “who is like God,” is kind of the same name. It just changes the ch to sh. “Who is like God?” And so God is incomparable. So again, there is no other god like our God.

So Azariah—“Azar” is a helper. And so with Azar-iah, (Yah; Yahweh) is a Helper, or even a Rescuer, which is a great thing to assert in a type of exile when you’re in captivity.

And then you have Hananiah. My beautiful wife’s name is Hannah, which means “grace.” So she’s double grace; she’s Hannah Grace, because I need more grace. And Hananiah is “Yahweh is gracious.”

And these are the names. And even though we have them renamed here, the author continues to use these names. And he wants his audience, his hearers, to remember these names and these characteristics of God. God is still just. God is still a Rescuer and still gracious, and He is still incomparable. And so right here with these names, even though they’re kind of a renaming, a re-acculturation if you will, Daniel wants his readers to

“Faithful Living in an Unfaithful World”

know that despite the disaster, this is who our God is, even in exile. Does that make sense? Is that persuasive? Is that helpful?

Dick: It almost seems like what we’re going through now. Am I right?

Don Maurer: I don’t think so.

Clay: Yes and no. I would say, if you look at the conclusion point, I wrote: “Conclusion: Church in Exile.” So in one sense now, meaning since Christ ascended, yes, because Peter addresses the church in exile. He calls us “*sojourners and exiles.*” And we’ll look at that at the very end of our time today.

So I’d say yes. But I wouldn’t say that we are the nation of Israel, and that we’re in—

Dick: I just meant some of the ways they’re trying to change our thoughts. I remember reading something a couple of months ago from John MacArthur. No wonder God is judging us. We’ve turned our backs on Him for so many things. He hasn’t given up on us. But we’re bad people.

Clay: Yes, we are bad people. And I would say yes. I think you’re right to see some parallels, for sure. Seth and Cain are still fighting each other. So you have the people of God and the people in the world.

Dick: Yeah.

Clay: And they don’t get along. They never have and they never will until we have a new creation, right?—with only the people of God. So I would certainly say yes. I think this is where we are, like the New Testament talks about—the church in exile.

Dave Wessel: There is an attempt today to erase our history, so we don’t know our history and where we are today, and who we were.

Clay: Yeah.

Dave: If the Israelites remembered who they were they would have recognized God, whereas if you change it,—which you really can’t do,—if you pretend to change history, you can make people think they are different from who they were.

Clay: Yes, that’s a good point. I’ll get to you in a little bit, Don. A lot of Scriptures the command to remember is tremendously loud. It’s constant. “Remember who you are; remember this; remember that. Remember your fathers, and don’t make the mistakes they made in the wilderness,” or whatever. But yes, that’s really important. The people of God are always called to remember. And the world might very well ask you to forget, and in an attempt to do that will make you forget. Don?

Don Maurer: Dick, I understand what you’re saying, and I agree with you to a certain extent. But I think that a lot of people for example in Afghanistan, or other Middle Eastern countries, or China, are going through a lot worse. That speaks to what is happening here more than what we’re going through right now. I mean, people have attempted to do this, but our churches haven’t been shut down. We still have our freedoms—for how long I don’t know—but we still have them.

Dick: Maybe you can get up some morning and read the paper.

Don: But you know, we haven’t been kidnapped and told, “You’re going to embrace paganism,” or whatever.

Clay: Right. So there are certainly different cultures in the world with different agendas, and so on and so forth. Bishop Rodgers.

“Faithful Living in an Unfaithful World”

Bishop: I think it was Hitler who said, “Give me your children and I’ll take the nation.”

Clay: Say that again.

Bishop: “Give me your children and I’ll take the nation.”

Clay: Mm-hmm.

Bishop: If we can get our kids to no longer remember and know what we were, then you’re old enough to form that in a way that’s quite contrary.

Clay: Sure. I mean, this is a pretty common tactic. Stand right here and take these wealthy young bucks. Indoctrinate them, and then use them as your ambassadors.

Bishop: Right.

Clay: You might not actually go and smash the temple like they ended up having to do. This is pretty early in the Exile. The temple doesn’t end up getting destroyed until 587 B.C. But yes; he certainly knows what he’s doing for sure.

Ted: I have something I might add. We talk about our history. Our history is the history of God’s people, and ultimately not the United States.

Clay: Right.

Ted: I’m reading Isaiah 40, verse 15.

“Behold, all the nations”—all the nations,

“Are as a drop in the bucket.

They are as dust on the scales.”

So, I mean, we’re very fortunate in this country. But it is as a drop in the bucket and as dust on the scales. The only history that counts is ultimately the history of God’s people. And that’s the history that I want to tell my children about.

Clay: Mm-hmm.

Ted: Because we have no privileged position.

Clay: Well said.

Bishop: Well, I’m not moving that can. *(Laughter)*

Clay: Okay. Well, let’s move on to the next section. That was just the first seven verses. Let’s move on to the next section, which I have labeled “A Dilemma,” because now we move, really quite interestingly, I think, to some really grand scale international event, and now we’re moving even into Daniel’s intentions. I think the New King James said that he *“purposed in his heart.”* I actually quite like that. Often translations will have *“he determined,”* or *“he resolved,”* or something like that, which is fine; it’s a really good translation. But actually what we have here is sort of a pun to really show you how stark it is what Daniel is doing.

When we have the renaming we have a kind of odd Hebrew idiom, where Daniel says that Ashpenaz, the chief eunuch, set a name to Daniel. He set new names to them. And we see that again in verse 7: he set such and such to Daniel. And usually they’ll use that idiom. Usually in Hebrew you use it. They called their names this. That is what we see any time you get a name in. But in Daniel we have “he set a name to them.”

And then in verse 8 you have that exact verb: “But Daniel set his heart not to defile himself.” And so it’s very much showing the break in this kind of flow. Daniel then

“Faithful Living in an Unfaithful World”

determines, he resolves, he purposes in his heart not to defile himself with the king’s food.

Now there has been quite a lot of debate about what exactly was defiling about the food. There are arguments for and against, and a lot of different theories. And I think there are three theories. One is that it was ritual defilement. And so in the Mosaic law you’re not allowed to eat this food; we know that. You can read anything in the Pentateuch or the Torah, and you have a lot of unclean and clean animals, and a lot of different ways to prepare food. So maybe it was something in the preparation of the food that you weren’t allowed to do, that you weren’t allowed to eat as a Jew. So they are resisting ritual defilement.

The other one is that it could be moral defilement. This is food that was previously sacrificed to idols. In eating the food you are now submitting to these idols, so we can’t do that. This would be morally idolatrous, not just ritually impure, to eat this food.

And then thirdly some authors have said and argued that maybe this is more of a national defilement. When you think of the phrase “The Knights of the Round Table,” if you’re eating at the king’s table you’re very much submitting to all right, now we’re Babylonians. Now we are the king’s servants. We thoroughly assent to the fact that we are no longer Israelites. And so they could be resisting that.

And at the end of the day, we don’t know. And I don’t necessarily think that these are mutually exclusive. I suppose that it could be one, two, or all three of them; we don’t know. We know that it was defiling. We know that at some point that Daniel started to eat the king’s food because in chapter 10, when he had visions, in chapter ten it says that after he had a certain vision he stopped eating the king’s food and he stopped drinking the king’s wine. He uses the exact same phrase here. And so if he stopped he must have started again at some point. So whatever it was, we don’t know why it was defiling, or why it was only defiling for a certain period of time. But we certainly know that it was defiling, and that whatever it was, he knew that he couldn’t do it; he and his friends couldn’t do it.

And so he goes and talks to his boss. He says, “Hey, boss, I can’t do this.” The boss is like “Are you trying to get me killed?”

“Okay; fair point. Let me talk to my assistant manager.”

He comes to the assistant manager and says, “Hey, please give me a chance. Give me ten days. Just give me ten days, please. Help me out here.”

And he’s like “Okay, that’s fair.” And then he drinks water. And I can’t remember what the New King James says.

Don Maurer: Vegetables.

Clay: Vegetables, yeah. It’s actually kind of an odd word. We’ve never had that word before, so we’re not quite sure what it means. We know it’s related to *seed*. So I think the King James says “*pulse*,” so it’s some kind of seeded thing. I think it’s helpful for us because there are a lot of creative vegetarian diets. And it’s pretty easy for us to imagine how a vegetarian diet could be successful, although not comfortable.

But I think it’s more helpful and more stark to us. I would say that they ate water and bird seed for ten days. (*Laughter*) There’s no way that anyone could get fatter of flesh

“Faithful Living in an Unfaithful World”

eating water and bird seed for ten days. And so it’s a lot starker if you see the miracle more clearly. It’s clearly miraculous that the Lord is blessing Daniel and his resolve not to defile himself.

I want you to see two things. One is that I think it’s helpful to think about the miracle of the food and the blessing of that. But then it’s implied that God blessed them and that God is working this miracle. What is explicitly stated is that God gave favor and compassion to Daniel when he talks to his boss.

And I think it’s at least interesting to ask the question. Which is more surprising: that Daniel’s friends had this miraculous result to a diet, or that they had a very surprising response from their bosses?

Imagine it. You have this kid from Judah who is like “Oh, I can’t defile myself, and I’m going to eat something else.” And he’s like “Are you trying to get me killed?” I mean, how easy would it be for him to say, “Okay, well Daniel is out of here. We have other kids that we can get to eat our food.”

I think it’s something worth wrestling with, that you have two quite surprising things happening here. #1. You have a favorable response from both the chief eunuch Ashpenaz and then the servant who Daniel goes and talks to later. And then you have a miraculous kind of dietary result.

And I think it’s helpful, at least on the one hand, when you see that God gave Daniel compassion and favor. And Daniel in receiving that compassion and favor seems to be, as presented here, very polite. And I really like how the New King James actually added the word *please*, because I think it’s there. Some translations don’t have the word *please*, and I know why. It’s a particle in Hebrew. And I asked my professor, “How do you translate (this Hebrew particle?)” And he said, “I’m not sure.” Some people think it’s some kind of politeness factor. And I think in Daniel you have a really good argument for that. I kind of forgot the book, so that’s why I like it there.

Anyway, he goes and he says, “Please test your servants.” And even when he goes to the second servant he accommodates his request. He doesn’t come in with the same request; he accommodates it. He says, “Well, please test us for ten days. Just give me a chance.”

And so here is what I want you to see. I want you to see a respectful young man requesting from his boss to help him not to defile himself. We do not see a rebellious young man who goes storming into the king’s castle and says, “There’s no way you can make me do this!” I just don’t see that. We just don’t have anything that even resembles that. We have them doing kind of as much as they can. But when it comes down to it, they know that they can’t do this. And then they go to their boss and say, “Please, will you work with me on this one?”

And I think that’s really instructive for us (for me, I should say.) I think that oftentimes I’m very tempted to be stubborn more than to be faithful. And I think the idea of faithfulness is positive and it works toward faithfulness to God and faithfulness to neighbor. And constantly God was saying, “Don’t resist. Babylon will come, and you need to go to Babylon. And you need to get married there and build houses and pray for the peace.”

“Faithful Living in an Unfaithful World”

And the Israelites are like “Uh-uh; there’s no way we’re doing that!” And that’s what we see here. We see Daniel saying, “Hey, I’m trying to live here; I really am. But there’s a line.” Don?

Don Maurer: He didn’t say, “I have my rights!”, (*Laughter*), as so many people say today, right?

Clay: Yes. There’s a lot he didn’t say which can be instructive. But I continue to find encouragement from Daniel, in that he was able to resolve respectfully. And I think that is tremendously difficult for someone as stubborn as I am not to dig your heels and be a jerk about it. Other thoughts?

Dick: We forget that God is in charge.

Clay: Mm-hmm.

Dick: How many mistakes do we make and say, “Oh my goodness! I was shown that and I didn’t do it!” So we’re sort of repeating ourselves here if we’re not going to learn.

Clay: Yeah.

Dick: We don’t learn.

Clay: Scripture repeats itself, so we repeat ourselves. Remember that God is our God; he is in control.

Dick: Yeah!

Clay: That is very helpful.

Ted: Daniel is not coming out of a position of strength. When you come in aggressively you’re ready to bite your tongue from a position of self-strength.

Clay: Mm-hmm.

Ted: Versus trusting in God. In a sense I’m making myself weaker by being polite and gracious.

Clay: Mm-hmm.

Ted: And knowing that this person could take advantage of me, versus me becoming like a bull.

Clay: Mm-hmm.

Ted: And we don’t worry because we think that we win the day, versus God winning the day.

Dick: And you really don’t understand. I have the right answer.

Ted: Right. (*Laughter*) You’ll be fine; just keep your cool body position. (*Laughter*) That’s a huge problem.

Clay: Sure.

Don Maurer: And we see this even in Daniel chapter 3 too, with the three men in the furnace, before they went into the furnace. “O king, God is able to deliver us. But even if he doesn’t, we’re not going to do it.” I don’t think they were disrespectful at all.

Clay: Mm-hmm.

Don: That was just the way it was.

Clay: Sure.

Ted: That’s why I wonder about Paul’s response where it’s written in Acts, where he makes the point that “I’m a Roman citizen and you can’t do this to me.” I have to admit

“Faithful Living in an Unfaithful World”

that I’m troubled by Paul’s response to persecution. It seems very different from what Daniel is doing.

Clay: Yeah.

Don Rimbey: That’s what sent Paul to Rome.

Ted: What?

Don: That’s what sent Paul to Rome.

Ted: Well, I know that the end result was good. But I’m just thinking, so what’s the point? Is he thinking that, or did God use him? You know what I mean? Was Paul thinking that “if I serve with my authority here and my privilege I can get to Rome?” Or did he say, “I can assert my privilege and not get beat up?” I puzzle over it.

Clay: I won’t get sidetracked with Paul. I do think it’s interesting that when Paul is talking to Felix, Felix doesn’t like him. He said, “If he didn’t appeal to Rome, we’d let him go.” And so I think that Paul wants to go to Rome. I think he wants to get there.

Ted: I was thinking more of the beating that Paul was receiving. It was illegal to beat a Roman citizen.

Clay: Yes; that’s right. They stretched him out to interrogate him. So really, to wrap up this section here, I summarize that yes, Daniel trusted God. So I want to color into that, because I think it’s really easy for us to say, “I trust that God rules the world,” right?

So in step one, when we’re seeing God, God gave Jehoiakim to Nebuchadnezzar. He’s involved in international politics and the fixing of the world. And we zoom in, and we see a conversation between a kid and his boss. And God gave him compassion and favor as well. And so God is very much interested in your inter-personal conversations and how you carry yourself there, in what you’re resolving to do, and in how you go about that resolution. So again I want us to think deeply and carefully about when we say that we trust God.

What do we trust God to do? Well, we trust God to do and to be in control of everything. There is nothing too big. The world is in His control. And the way you talk to your neighbor is in His control. And I think that’s really, really important. Again, that’s just more of a summary point of how we see that God gave. I’m not sure of the intention of the New King James. But in the ESV that I’m using it seems really nice and clear. “*And then God gave. And then God gave.*” And then when we move into this next section, “*And God gave.*” And that’s the structure of this chapter. That’s the really important point for Daniel chapter 1 and for Daniel. Despite circumstances God is the One in control. He is the One doing the giving. He is the One who has the plan.

Okay. Let’s go lastly to just the last four verses, where I’ve labeled it “Deliverance.” He is able to serve the king.

And I really do think that there is a lot to unpack here. I think it’s interesting—maybe not interesting, but convicting would be the better term—that God blesses Daniel so that he can bless King Nebuchadnezzar. If God didn’t give Daniel the ability to succeed at Babylon Seminary, the rest of the book of Daniel is probably not happening. And God gives Daniel general wisdom. You know, he is able to read the literature. It comes to him and his friends; He generally blessed him in his studies.

“Faithful Living in an Unfaithful World”

But it’s also specific. *“And to Daniel he gave the ability to interpret all manner of dreams.”* “And so there’s also a special gift given to Daniel for a particular task that Daniel needed to do to serve the king. And we see the purpose comes to fruition in the next chapter and the chapters to come.

But again, it’s convicting to me that when God gifts me it’s to serve God and to serve my neighbor. And that’s a challenging thing. Sometimes it’s really easy to say that I’m going to serve God. And that means that my neighbor is getting the short end of the stick. And that’s just not the picture we have here in Daniel.

But I want you guys to see this in the very last verse of chapter 1, verse 21. It says that *“Daniel served until the first year of King Cyrus.”* When was that? Does anyone know?

Don Maurer: 539.

Clay: Okay. When is Daniel going to Babylon?

Don: 605.

Clay: Okay. How many years is that?

Don: 66.

Clay: 66 years. So Daniel serves for the entire Exile in the court. So pick an age; let’s say he’s ten. He’s ten when he gets there. And 66 years later he is now 76 years old. He’s not making the trek from Babylon back to the return. He can’t make that trip. So he’s watching the people return. And he is just standing there serving.

It very much feels almost like Moses. I talked to you about Moses. Moses has the promises of God, but he can’t go in. And I think it’s really important and it’s really helpful, because for Daniel and for Moses the promises of God were the future were reason enough to serve God faithfully in the present. They knew that God would take care of His people. They knew that the Promised Land would be possessed. They knew that the exiles would return, and there was promise there. And so they knew that because of that they could serve faithfully. God was in control and it was part of His plan. His promises are always true. And they could trust that enough and serve God and them where they were. So whether that’s in the wilderness or whether that’s in exile, that was reason enough for them. And I think that’s just awfully convicting to myself, to make sure that I know and trust the promises of God. And that is reason enough for me to faithfully serve God and my neighbor, whoever that neighbor might be, by the way—whether it’s my lovely, sweet Hannah, or whether that’s my brother or my father and mother, or my boss, or whoever.

That was really quick because I want to get to the conclusion and respect your time as well. Any thoughts or comments? Yes, please?

Don Maurer: Yes. #1. I think that we need to remember that it wasn’t just the people who were gross sinners for whom the judgment was coming. The believers—Daniel and his three friends—were also swept into the judgment. They suffered the consequences too. And yet they stood firm.

Clay: Yeah.

Don: Just because you’re a Christian it doesn’t mean that things are always going to go well for you.

Clay: Mm-hmm.

“Faithful Living in an Unfaithful World”

Don: And then the second thing is—I’m having a brain freeze here. I’ll think of it.

Clay: All right.

Ted: I’m thinking that Moses did not see it and Daniel did not see it. I’m reading Hebrews. *“And all these, though commended through faith, did not receive what was promised.”*

Clay: Yes; Hebrews 11.

Ted: You know, in many ways it just bears out one of the tragedies of being a Christian, because there is so much that we never see in this life. So there’s a sadness. But nevertheless we live by faith. So even though—

Clay: Sure.

Ted: Dietrich Bonhoeffer was executed two weeks before his prison camp was liberated, his wife and kids never saw him again.

Don Maurer: Yes, and that was kind of what I was going to say. We read about these deliverances for Daniel and his friends in the first six chapters of Daniel. And we think, why doesn’t God do that for us? And it doesn’t happen, or it very seldom happens. And we have to remember, as Ted said, that *“we walk by faith, not by sight.”* It would have been so easy for Daniel and his three friends to compromise, and give all kinds of rationalizations and reasons. *“Well, I didn’t really mean it. I don’t really mean it if I bow down toward that image, or whatever.”* Or, *“think of how God has blessed me.”* Or in a New Testament context, *“Well, I can’t lose my salvation. God will still forgive me. He forgave Peter after he denied Christ.”* Yet they stood firm.

Ted: Good.

Brave Man: I think it’s definitely inspiring. Daniel basically remained faithful despite his environment or the situation. And I think that’s the takeaway that I get from this, you know. As Don mentioned, they didn’t compromise. And he didn’t change his actions. And that to me is really what faith is, right? He’s just going to do what he knows is right. He didn’t defile himself no matter where he was at. It’s easy to do the right thing when you’re with people who are doing the right thing, right? But what are you going to do when you’re not with people who are doing the right thing?

Clay: Yeah. And what’s really interesting to think about is that when we see those first seven verses, what would we resist? You might look at Daniel and say, *“Wait a minute. Why aren’t you resisting the renaming? They’re calling you Belteshazzar. How can you possibly let that stand?”* Or *“you’re learning all these dreams and visions and pagan skills, and whatever. How could you compromise in that way?”* And God blesses them and gives more of them. But with worship, you can’t touch that. I can’t defile myself in terms of worshiping the Lord.

And so for me again, a lot of this is close to my heart because it’s been so convicting to me in my life. But again, for the longest time I thought, why the food? Why resist the food? Of all the things he resists, he resists the food. And it’s convicting me when I look at Daniel and say, *“Oh, you’re compromising.”* Or I say, *“Good for you. You’re setting an example of how to resolve, and you’re discerning.”*

There’s a lot to talk about here. I think the Lord in His word gives wisdom and discernment and insight. It’s very much reminiscent of Proverbs. And so I would argue

“Faithful Living in an Unfaithful World”

that this is both that the Lord is giving Daniel wisdom and insight into a fear of the Lord in his discernment of the Scriptures, as well as insight and wisdom into the language of the Chaldeans, and so on and so forth. But I just think that Daniel’s discernment is just as admirable, if not more so, than his determination to stay faithful. “By faith, by faith, by faith.”

I was going to say something in response to Don; I can’t remember. Did you have your hand up? No? Bishop Rodgers?

Bishop: There’s an old saying that there is only one meaning to a text, but many applications.

Clay: Mm-hmm.

Bishop: And with a text such as this, what we need to resist may be quite diverse among us, depending on what’s tempting us.

Clay: Mm-hmm.

Bishop: It’s not just a general thing. It has all kinds of specifics to it.

Clay: Well said. Okay. Well, in conclusion I guess I want to take you to 1 Peter. So if you have a copy of the Scriptures I’ll take you there. Otherwise I’ll just read it aloud. We talked a little about this at the very beginning. And I think that the Exile is an image that Peter very much develops in the New Testament church. And he addresses it to those who are elect exiles, right off in the beginning at verse 1: “*to those who are elect exiles.*” And when I preached a sermon on this text I said that Daniel was an elect exile. He’s not just a regular exile. God put him there and he is an elect exile. So I’m going to read twelve verses.

I think that when we look at Daniel it’s really easy to say, “Dare to be a Daniel. You know, be more like Daniel.”

And I think there are two things. #1. First, to dare to have the faith that Daniel had is one thing. To dare to have faith in the God whom Daniel had faith in—I would much rather say that. Okay, Daniel had faith in God. God ended up giving him favor and giving him compassion and giving him insight. This is “by faith, by faith, by faith.”

But I don’t want to diminish the example, because I think that Daniel gives us an example of our true Example in Jesus Christ. I think 1 Peter 2 gets us there. So I’m going to read to you a long section of 1 Peter 2 starting in 1 Peter 2 verse 11.

“Beloved, I urge you, as sojourners and exiles, to abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds, and glorify God on the day of visitation.

“Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to the governors, as sent by Him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good that you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone; love the brotherhood; fear God; honor the emperor.

“Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the unjust. For this is a gracious thing, when mindful of God, one endures

“Faithful Living in an Unfaithful World”

sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it, if you sin and are beaten for it, you endure it? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure it, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.

“For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps. ‘He committed no sin; neither was deceit found in His mouth.’ When He was reviled, He did not revile in return. When He suffered, He did not threaten, but continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly.”

As we said at the beginning, Daniel’s name means “God is my Judge.” And that’s how he lived. And ultimately that’s how Christ lived. Christ set the example of how to live, continuing constantly and entrusting Himself to God, who is my Judge.

And I think that is the example that we get from Daniel. Daniel—his name, his life—it all points forward to Christ who did all these things perfectly. And it was all because He was entrusting Himself. He lived as if He were Daniel, as if He were the One who proclaimed that God is My Judge, and that it is before God whom I serve.

And the servant of the Lord, even in serving governors or emperors or anyone else, whether they are beating me up or trying to be gentle, I do all this service because ultimately God is my Judge. He is who I serve. He is who I am honoring and worshiping.

Christ is our ultimate example, not Daniel. Yes, Daniel shows us faith. But Christ shows us true faith, perfect faith, through His whole life, not just for much of the period of His life.

So I really want to tie that into Jesus Christ my Savior. I really can’t talk about the Old Testament and not talk about how it points to Christ. And Daniel continues to develop Christ not only as an Example, but an Object—the Object in whom we put our faith.

And so we think of Daniel 3—the One who looks like the Son of Man who is in the furnace, or who is coming on the clouds in Daniel 7, or who is the Rock in Daniel 2. I mean, there are a lot of images. We put faith in Christ in Daniel. But then also we look to Christ to be like Christ. We get pictures of that in Daniel as well. So I want you to hold Christ with both your hands—both as the object of your faith and whom you trust, but also as the example of your faith, whose steps you follow, as you honor everyone, as you love the Lord and as you worship Him with thought, word and deed.

That’s my conclusion. If you have any concluding thoughts I’d be happy to hear them. Otherwise, I won’t take up more of your time. *(Applause)* Thank you.

Dick: Will you be coming back here?

Clay: I am not. I believe Jeff is next week, and then I’ll be leaving after that. So I’ll be going back to San Diego.

Dick: Thank you very much.

Don Maurer: Thank you so much.

Clay: My pleasure. Daniel is close to my heart, and I’m happy to open up God’s good Word.

Well, let me pray for us real quick. Father in heaven, we are tremendously thankful for Your good Word, for How you are constantly patient with us, reminding us over and over and over again that You are our Creator, that You are our King, that You are our God, but

“Faithful Living in an Unfaithful World”

You are also our Savior. And You sent Your Son, that we might have an Example of how to live and how to walk, and that we might have Someone in whom we can believe for our salvation, for we are dead, and that Your Son, having accomplished all things, is now sitting and reigning on the throne at Your right hand, and who has sent His Spirit to complete the work that He started in us. And so we by faith pray in Christ’s name, that we might be more like Him, that we might be conformed to His image, and not conformed to this world. Would Your Spirit help us in that endeavor, always pointing back to You and giving You thanks and worship, as is due Your name? In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.