

Title; Mandate for Integrity  
Text: Daniel 1: 8-21

I understand that the theme for this year is “Attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13). This theme causes me to consider the attributes one displays when he or she reaches the state of entire sanctification. If I had to name the most important attribute it would be INTEGRITY. Webster defines integrity as the quality of state of being complete and undivided; an unimpaired condition: soundness. There is a definition I heard years ago that has always stuck with me. It says that Integrity is the ability to maintain your commitment after the circumstances under which that commitment was made has changed.

The commitments you make in good times will inevitably guide your actions during times of turbulence.

- The following words by Mark Twain are framed at his memorial in Hartford, Conn, “Always do right. It will gratify some people and astonish the rest.”
- Abraham Lincoln said it this way, “I desire so to conduct the affairs of this administration that if at the end, when I lay down the reins of power, I shall at least have one friend left, and that friend shall be inside of me.”
- This is what Stephen Covey describes as one of the 30 Methods of influence for leaders in Principle centered leadership, “*Keep the promises you make to others*”.
- My grandmother described it this way, “Say what you mean and do what you say.”

For pastors, politicians, and pundits alike, we must all show integrity in our dealings with others.

It is highly likely that Daniel's life was directly or indirectly affected by the reform in Judah led by the good King Josiah upon finding the Book of the Law (2 Kings 22). Upon reading the Book of the Law Josiah called all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem together and renewed the covenant made by their forefathers. Daniels parents may very well be among those elders who gathered at the temple that day. But it is apparent that Daniel was made of the integrity that was rediscovered with the finding of the book of the Law.

Later when he was taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians, and taken to a foreign country, Daniel still remembered his commitment to God. Would his commitment made in the afterglow of a revival, keep him in a strange land?

### **First, let us look at Daniel's Exceptional Resolve (v.8)**

*But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine,(v. 8a)*

- ✓ The chief official had already exchanged his godly name Daniel (God is my Judge) for the pagan name Belteshazzar ( Baal protect his life)
  - **Hananiah** - the Lord shows grace; to **Shadrach** – command of Aku (moon god)
  - **Mishael** – who is what God is; to **Meshach** – who is what Aku is
  - **Azariah** – the Lord helps; to **Abednego** – servant of Nebo
- ✓ But Daniel understood that it's not what they call you but what you answer to

- ✓ Now they wanted to change what Daniel put on the inside - here is where Daniel drew the line
  - The royal food in Babylon was offered to idol gods before it was eaten. The law of Moses prohibited the Jews from eating food offered to idols
  - There is no doubt in my mind that this food was rich, along with the best of wines.
  - Daniel must have known that it was not about food. The real goal of their captors was to take these boys who were Jewish on the outside and make them Babylonian on the inside
- ✓ Ladies and gentleman, a strategy of the enemy is to paint us Christian on the outside and pagan on the inside
- ✓ We cannot allow our faith to be superficial, but it must go to the core of who we are

**Secondly, consider his Uncommon Standard (v. 8b)**

*...And he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.*

(Dan 1:8b)

- ✓ He's turning down prime rib for asparagus; filet mignon for broccoli!
- ✓ Daniel did not get ugly or outwardly rebellious, but he negotiated his diet with a pre-test, post-test comparison
- ✓ See how close you can live to God not visa-versa
- ✓ Set high standards for yourself – when you do this your skills become obvious to the observer
- ✓ People will respect you and at the end of the day, you will respect yourself

**Thirdly, see the Favorable Outcome (v.15)**

*At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. 16 So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead. (Dan 1:15)*

- ✓ Daniel and his 3 friends looked healthier and better nourished than their colleagues (several were taken from their homeland)
- ✓ I think of the words of the psalmist, “thy preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies” (PS 23)
- ✓ The steps of a good man are ordained by the Lord, and he delighteth in his way (PS 37:23)

**Finally, we see an Unearthly Protection (v. 9)**

*Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel (v.9)*

- ✓ The invisible hands of God will show himself strong in visible ways
- ✓ The seeds of integrity you plant in your early years will grow into forests of righteousness in your latter years
- ✓ Roughly 50 years later, Daniel is now an elder statesman. A new king (Darius) has come on the scene and he wants to place Daniel over the entire kingdom (6:3)
- ✓ The satraps and the administrators conspire to set Daniel up to “bring him down”
- ✓ But because Daniel kept his integrity intact, God kept him from the mouths of lions
- ✓ Your integrity may not keep you out of the Lion’s den, but it will keep you from the lions