

# Standing Firm in the Culture of Compromise

## Unfocused, Distracted and Busy Lives- 4<sup>th</sup> Sermon

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The book of Daniel not only tells us stories of what happened to Daniel, his friends and the people of Israel during their captivity in Babylon, but it also serves as a prophetic picture of our lives today. It warns, informs and encourages believers to live a godly life in an ungodly culture—almost like a field guide for living in the last days.

Today we look at another chapter describing Daniel's time in Babylon. I am sure God will speak to us today just as He warned king Belshazzar. Let's read Daniel chapter 5, verses 1-7.

The King's wise men came in, and they couldn't translate the strange writing that had mysteriously appeared from the floating hand. As we read, the king's knees were knocking, and yours and mine probably would have been too. When his consultants failed to translate the writing, the queen remembered Daniel and had him brought in. So, we read what happened next in Dan 5:13-16

Daniel came in and assessed the situation and told Belshazzar "Look, you can keep your gifts, I will tell you what this message says, but you probably won't like it". We are told that this new king reminded Daniel of the previous king, Belshazzar's father, Nebuchadnezzar, who did not listen to God's warning either and went insane for 7 years before he repented and God restored him. Like father, like son, right!

Daniel told Belshazzar that like his dad, he had allowed his pride and arrogance to get in the way: *Instead, you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven. You had the goblets from His temple brought to you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines drank wine from them. You praised the God of silver & gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honour the God who holds in His hand your life and all your ways. Therefore, He sent the hand that wrote the inscription (Dan 5:23-24).*

Like many phrases and verses derived from the Bible, the saying "the writing is on the wall" has become a common colloquialism meaning "imminent doom".

It is like a warning label stuck to the side of your life. When the handwriting is on the wall, it means everyone can see that disaster is about to happen. Something heavy is about to drop.

In fact, if we look closely at Daniel's translation of what was written, we can see both a warning of coming punishment for Belshazzar and several key principles about how we are to live in the last days to avoid a similar punishment in eternity. Remember, Daniel is a prophetic book, and the handwriting remains on the wall for us today. Our lives are slipping through our hands like water, and if we don't slow down and focus on what matters most, we will lose something precious and irreplaceable. Thank God it is not too late yet for us. So, let's go deeper in finding the first principle.

### OUR DAYS ARE NUMBERED

"This is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN" (Dan 5:25). Keep in mind that this message was supernatural in origin. God basically created His own language for the inscription, knowing that His man Daniel would be the only one capable of translating it. Here is what these words mean: MENE—God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end (Dan 5:26). The Hebrew word that Daniel chose for his translation of God's message "Mene" literally meant "numbered". For added emphasis—it's repeated. It is a caution flag that continues to flutter today as well. Its message is simple: Don't forget that our days are numbered. But somehow, that's exactly what we often do. We live like there is no tomorrow and we only want to "eat, drink and merry (Luke 12:19). But God's word tells us that "people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). And the fact is, death could happen at any time.

When we realize that our days are numbered, then we realize the need to make them count. If we lived with the truth that we have a finite amount of time—a limited number of days, then we would make better decisions. It's just the logic of human nature, if we have plenty of food in our pantry, cupboard and fridge or if there is a lot of money in our bank accounts, then we feel like we'll always have enough. But when we are down to our last portion of supplies or last dollar, **suddenly** these things become precious. When we recognise our limitations, we tend to make the most of our lives.

When we live with this perspective, we can face the shifts of culture with a different attitude—one of clarity and focus on what matters most, one that

sets aside the distractions this world offers and keep our eyes on God. If Belshazzar had this kind of perspective, the last thing he probably would have been doing was partying and mocking God. But if we jump to the end of his story, we see his time ran out (Dan5:29-31).

It was too late for Belshazzar, but if those who are listening to me right now, then those still have time. Time to change and realign our time around what God wants. To be a person He created us to be—To stand apart from the culture chaos, To live for your God & To heed His message.

### **GETTING STARTED—Looking up to Jesus.**

While we may not digest the truth as stated in Hebrews 9:27, remembering that our days are numbered, can actually keep us focused, on making the most of the time we do have. Let us read Luke 2:52 and learn from it for our mutual growth, development and advancement.

The four ways in which Jesus grew: V52 “And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men”. Between V2.52 and 3:1, approximately eighteen years of Jesus life passed without comment/record. What was His life like? From Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3, we learn that He grew up in a large family, learned the trade to become carpenter. Since Joseph is not mentioned again In the Gospels, it is likely that Joseph died before Jesus began His public ministry and that Jesus provided fir His mother and the rest of the family. During all these years He grew and developed both physically and spiritually according to God’s will, fully conscious that God was His Father.

So, the picture we see here is that Jesus grew:

1. Mentally (In Wisdom),
2. Physically (in Stature),
3. Spiritually (Favour with God)
4. Relationally (Favour with men).

This is the pattern & picture that the Church has to follow. The believers/church must allow the Spirit of truth to work in our hearts and minds (Jn 16:13-14) to make God’s commands and ways a delight to us (Ps119: 47-48). Further benefits of Godly wisdom are mentioned in Proverbs 3:13-16.

### **WISDOM: Five Examples of Getting Wisdom:**

1. Joseph ([Genesis 41:38-39](#))
2. Moses ([Exodus 4:12](#))
3. Solomon ([1 Kings 3:12](#); [1 Kings 4:29](#))
4. Daniel ([Daniel 1:17](#); [Daniel 2:23](#))
5. Stephen ([Acts 6:5,10](#))

### **PHYSICAL GROWTH:**

Proverbs 3: Verses 1-2 and 7-10 are good reference to the physical growth of the church and the believers therein. Generally speaking, Obeying God and living by His holy principles will result in better health (V8), a longer life and a happier and prosperous life (V16). However, there are exceptions as well under the sovereign rule of God. At times the righteous are afflicted (Job 1-2) and do not live long lives (Acts 7:59-60). Conversely, sometimes it is the wicked who are healthy and prosperous (Ps 73:3,12; James 5:5), though their final judgment is sure (Ps 73: 17-20 and James 5:1-4).

**SPITITUAL GROWTH: Spiritual growth involves hearing, learning, and following.** The people had entered into a covenant with God, and Moses commanded them to listen, learn, and obey his statutes. Christians also have entered into a covenant with God (through Jesus Christ) and should be responsive to what God expects. Moses' threefold command to the Israelites is excellent advice for all God's followers. *Hearing* is absorbing and accepting information about God. *Learning* is understanding its meaning and implications. *Following* is putting into action all we have learned and understood. All three parts are essential to a growing relationship with God.

**Spiritual growth is always dependent on our vital connection** to God. In Isaiah 27:11, he compares the state of Israel's spiritual life with dead branches that are broken off and used to make fires. Trees in Scripture often represent spiritual life. The trunk is the source or channel of strength from God, giving life to the branches, which represent the people who serve him. Tree branches sometimes waver and blow in the wind. Like Israel, they may dry up from internal rottenness and become useless for anything except building a fire. What kind of branch are you? If you are withering spiritually, check to see if you are vitally connected to God. In John chapter 15, Jesus talked about the true vine and the branches. And he spoke of two categories of branches: fruitless & fruitful. To remain fruitful, the believers **MUST** remain in Christ, so that He can remain in us. We cannot bear any fruit unless we actively remain in Him (John 15:4).

### **RELATIONAL GROWTH:**

Jesus in Matthew 22:39 taught us about the 2<sup>nd</sup> greatest commands: “Love your neighbour as yourself“. Likewise, in Matthew 5:44 he taught us to “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you—that you may be the sons/daughters of your Father in Heaven”.

Children of God are required to love all people (cf Gal 6:10; 1Th 3:12), including their enemies. They are also commanded to love all true born-again Christians in a special way (see Jn 13:34, Gal 6:10; 1 Th 3:12; 1 Jn 3:11). The love of believers for their Christian brothers and sisters, their neighbours and

their enemies must be subordinated to, and controlled and directed by, their loving affection for and devotion to God. Remember, love for God is the “first and greatest commandment”.

In our practice of love for all people we reflect an essential characteristic of God in us which produces our relational growth as a witness amongst the mankind. Love is the church's most effective weapon. Love is the essence of God's nature. Love is the perfection of human character. Love is the most powerful, ultimate force in the universe.

We must look up to Jesus and grow as He grew. What matters most for God's kingdom and the life He has given to us, that is what is most important & most urgent for believers and the church of Christ. May God empower us to completely follow His Son Jesus Christ...Amen.