

Introduction:

1. Our series from the Book of Daniel is entitled “God Rules in the Kingdom of Men” (Daniel 4:17b).
 - a. Typically, when we use that phrase, we add an “s” to the word “Kingdom” as though the statement had to do with nations. And, while it is true that God does reign over and control nations and kingdoms, the idea is larger than that.
 - b. The NASB correctly translates it “God rules over the realm of mankind.” There is not a nation on earth that is not accountable to God. But, it’s more the idea that there is not a man or woman on earth that is not accountable to God’s rule. He rules over the whole realm of mankind.
2. And, if God rules over nations, and over mankind, then it is axiomatic that He rules over Daniel.
 - a. When we speak of God ruling over mankind that does not mean that all of mankind submits to His rule. But it does mean that God is in charge and can do as He wills, Daniel 4:34-35.
 - b. Daniel, however, was a man who submitted to the will of God. He did the will of God even though opportunities for compromise were many. He was a man of character.

The Lesson:**I. Daniel’s personal character was manifested in his public life.**

- A. It is often said that what a person does in his/her private life has no bearing on his public life.
 1. Numerous dignitaries—politicians, athletes, TV personalities and even preachers—have been caught in moments of indiscretion with drugs, sexual immorality or some other objectionable behavior.
 2. But there are always defenders of such persons who will say “That is their private life and is none of our business.”
 3. Indeed, some elements of another’s private life are none of our business. But when an airline pilot is using drugs in his private life, it becomes my business if he is going to pilot my plane. If a man is a preacher and lies about his marital faithfulness, can I trust him to treat the Bible fairly when he gets in the pulpit? If a man is deceitful in his personal finances, do I want to elect him to be the treasurer of the state of Texas?
 4. While we may claim that a leader’s personal life is his own, we don’t really believe that. In our heart of hearts we know that we want men of integrity in leadership positions.
- B. One of the things that made the prophet Daniel such a great leader was that he was a man of high personal character.
 1. What Daniel was in his private life he was in his public life. Daniel illustrates why character plays such a vital role.
 2. Daniel was a captive in Babylon (Daniel 1:1, 6). He was there for more than 70 years. It could have been a time of mere survival. That is, he could have done whatever it took to please the Babylonians. He could “go along to get along.”
 3. But instead of going into survival mode, Daniel lived a disciplined life of character and personal integrity. This is what made Daniel such a great leader. We don’t often think of a captive being a great leader, but Daniel was indeed that!
- C. How was his personal character displayed during his 70 years of captivity? With respect to:
 1. *His Principles*. This is exemplified in his diet. One’s eating habits is indeed a private matter. But when Daniel was confronted with a requirement to eat unclean foods, he refused to compromise his principles, Daniel 1:8. While he didn’t necessarily want his diet to be a matter of public controversy, he was willing to publicly stand upon his faith, his personal convictions and principles.
 2. *His Motivation*. Motivation means motive for action. Every man has personal motives for doing the things he does. Even when those motives are buried deep within his heart, sooner or later they will come out—and often in a public way. Daniel was motivated by a desire to glorify God. That was revealed numerous times when he could have taken credit for interpreting dreams, Daniel 2:28-30. He took no credit unto himself.
 3. *His Truthfulness*. Daniel was a man of truth who spoke the truth regardless of the consequences. It was not politically correct to speak as he did to kings, Daniel 4:24-25; 5:27. A man may think himself honest in the depths of his heart, but does his honesty show in the moment of crisis, in the moment when honesty must speak what is unpopular?

4. *His Discipline.* Daniel was a man of private prayer. He communed with God three times a day, every day. When faced with a decree that would mean his death if he prayed, he continued to do what had always been his private practice, Daniel 6:10. Prayer was a part of what Daniel was. Did he want to make a public issue of it? No, but he would not relent!
5. *His Integrity.* What was Daniel's life really about? Was it about preaching for money? Was it about tickling the ears of the political leaders so he could get bribes and big payoffs? He had no interest in anything like that, Daniel 5:16-17.
6. *His Loyalty.* When it was apparent that Daniel was about to rise in the ranks in Babylon, he did not forget the three Hebrew boys who were taken captive with him, Daniel 2:24, 36, 49. Even though it is Daniel who interprets the king's dream, he speaks of "we" in verse 24. It is apparent that his friends are included in the "we" (verse 49).

II. Those who would be kingdom leaders need the character of Daniel.

- A. How a man addresses those things that he is confronted with in life reveals his character.
 1. It is often said that "crisis makes character." There may be some truth in that. But it is always true that "crisis reveals character." Public events often show what a man is really like in his private life. They often reveal his private thoughts and convictions. It was so with Daniel. The crises that he faced showed what he was really made of.
 2. Whenever we face any kind of crisis, we have to choose one of two paths—character or compromise. When we choose character we are made better people and better leaders.
 3. The things that make up our character are the building blocks that make up our lives.
 4. If you could be taken back in time 2600 years, back to ancient Babylon, would you like to work with/under Daniel? Why? Because with this kind of character you know you could trust him. He wouldn't cheat you or lead you astray. You would want to follow him.
 5. People will only follow a leader whom they trust. Character earns trust.
- B. Four facts about character.
 1. *Character is what you do, not just what you say.*
 - a. As you read through Daniel, the prophet never makes some great claim to character. He just shows it in all his actions.
 - b. Anyone can claim to be a person of integrity and loyalty. But talk is not enough. Action is the indicator. Daniel's actions were never separated from his character.
 2. *Character is something you get to choose in life.*
 - a. There are a lot of things we don't get to choose: our parents, our birthplace, the color of our skin or hair. Some people, through no choice of their own are born into wealth, others into poverty; some are born with beautiful voices, and some are born with less.
 - b. But character and personal integrity is something we absolutely choose in life. You can choose it regardless of skin color, financial standing, educational standing, social status or country. It is one of the most personal choices we ever make. Choose well!
 3. *Character is a mark of true success.*
 - a. Not everyone will be an advisor to kings as was Daniel. And certainly not everyone gets to be a prophet of God.
 - b. But whatever your lot in life—as a parent, child, wife, husband, worker, Christian, neighbor, student, teacher, whatever—you can be a success and you can be a leader by demonstrating high character and integrity.
 4. *One may have character without rank (and vice-versa).*
 - a. In a perfect world, only men of character would succeed to high office. All men of low character would fail and have low positions. We do not live in a perfect world.
 - b. Don't judge everyone in high places to be of high character, Daniel 4:17. While Nebuchadnezzar had high rank, he was a man of low character. One's rank in this world is not always indicative of his character. Who would you rather be—Nebuchadnezzar or Daniel? "I would rather be a king than a captive!" No, I mean on the Day of Judgment—who would you rather be? To ask is to answer!

Conclusion:

1. The ultimate revelation of character comes only on the last day. That is why we need to be warned about judging the eternal destiny of others. That is God's business, not ours, 1 Samuel 16:7.
2. How will God judge you on that day? What kind of character are you developing now?