



Resolved

15 Years Old

Imagine that you're a 15-year-old high schooler at the top of your class. One day, you're sitting at home watching Netflix when men suddenly storm in your house and take you and your family. They take you to a new place and tell you that a dictator has taken power. You are then forced to learn a new language and culture. Your life is turned upside down in a moment. You are no longer a free individual; you are now under the close eye of a new leader where a wrong move could cost you. How would you respond? For many of us, the response would be terror and confusion. Then, as time goes by, maybe anger and rage would set in and fester.

This situation happened to a boy name Daniel. Daniel was probably about 15 years old when he and many more intelligent and well-off individuals were taken into Babylon (present day Iraq) by King Nebuchadnezzar. A young man cut off from his people (Israel) found himself in a foreign culture, surrounded by slave masters. These people worshipped false gods and ate food that was prohibited for God's people to eat according to the Law of Moses. What a culture shock! How do you think Daniel responded? How would you respond?

From human perspective there might well be some despair. If American citizens who once were part the most powerful, freest nation in the world had suddenly come under a dictatorship, the change would be nigh impossible for most to handle. However, Daniel had a very close relationship with God. This, as we will find out, would be the primary motivating factor in his life.

Choice.

Nebuchadnezzar was praising his "gods" for his accomplishment over the God of Judah. The king decided to set aside a group of gifted young men to provide special services for the king, as well as establish a good political standing with those that he conquered. These powerful jobs were in stake and there was likely much competition.

The king looked for young men with no blemish. These men would be indoctrinated in the king's culture, false gods, and all the knowledge that the Babylonians had accumulated up to that point. Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael were among the chosen for what would be important roles within the king's empire. The latter three individuals are better known as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Names.

Changing names were a sign of rule and complete authority over someone. King Nebuchadnezzar changed these men's names from..

Before change:

Daniel: "God is my judge" →

Hananiah: "Yahweh is gracious" →

Mishael: "Who is like the Lord?" →

Azariah: "Yahweh is my helper" →

Beltshazzar: "Bel protect the King" (same name as Nebuchadnezzar's Son or Grandson and Bel was a Babylonian god)

Shadaku (Shadrach): meaning "command of Aku" a Babylonian moon god

Meshaku (Meshach): "who is as Aku is?" again referencing the moon god

Abednebo (Abednego): "servant of Nebo" the Babylonian god of wisdom

New names:

This name change meant that the King and his gods owned them. Not only was these boys lives changed but their names as well.

Resolved.

Daniel 1: 6-9

"Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. And the chief of the eunuchs gave them names: Daniel he called Beltshazzar, Hananiah he called Shadrach, Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego.

But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank. Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself. And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs,"

The word *resolve* used in this part of the text is the Hebrew verb *Sum/sim*, which means “to establish; to place; or to determine and set.” In other words, Daniel served the one true God and decided that if anything came in the way of that, he would not waver. This pleased God and because of the relationship He had with these men, God bestowed favor and compassion on them. Notice the text says that “*God gave them favor.*” It wasn’t anything these men had accomplished or done to earn this favor from God. They didn’t “find favor.” In actuality, “favor found them”. Remember that it was God’s plan for captivity of Israel. Israel had been committing idolatry and many other sins beforehand for many years. God had dealt patiently with them up until this time. This captivity wasn’t by random chance, and God never left Israel. God was faithful even when his people were not. It is God who sets kings and kingdoms, and it is God who brings success. Read part of Hannah’s prayer to bring perspective to who is really in control here:

1 Sam 2:6-9

*“The LORD kills and brings to life;
he brings down to Sheol and raises up.
The LORD makes poor and makes rich;
he brings low and he exalts.
He raises up the poor from the dust;
he lifts the needy from the ash heap
to make them sit with princes
and inherit a seat of honor.
For the pillars of the earth are the LORD’s,
and on them he has set the world.
“He will guard the feet of his faithful ones,
but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness,
for not by might shall a man prevail.”*

With all these these dramatic and drastic changes, these boys decided not to retreat from their faithful God. Notice this wasn’t based on a feeling that forced them to stay, but a mindful decision. It may have been uncertain at times, but they never turned their backs on the God who had their backs. Better yet, we go on to read just how well it pays off for them in the end.

Where is your resolve?

In our day-to-day lives, change and trials are inevitable. Good things and bad things happen all the time. If we are not careful, we can let our culture, circumstances, religion, politics, and popular belief transition and transform us in ways that may not

necessarily be helpful to God's kingdom. Now, ask yourself these questions: **in whom is your resolve?** and **who will be your deciding factor, no matter what?** Notice in both cases the use of *who* and *whom*, instead of *where* and *what*. Be reminded of the fact that, when it comes to our walk with God, it's always a question of *who*. If you have trouble answering these questions for yourself, enlist the help of a trusted leader. Most importantly, remember that it's what WE believe about God that can become a barrier, not who HE is.

*Resources: Gods presence during hardship by John Macarther/Biblehub ESV
Edited by Devonte Murdock*