**Prosperity in the Time of Oppression**

***8****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.****9****And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs,****10****and the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, “I fear my lord the king, who assigned your food and your drink; for why should he see that you were in worse condition than the youths who are of your own age? So you would endanger my head with the king.”****11****Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,****12****“Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink.****13****Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's food be observed by you, and deal with your servants according to what you see.”****14****So he listened to them in this matter, and tested them for ten days.****15****At the end of ten days it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's food.****16****So the steward took away their food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables*. (Daniel 1:8-16, ESV)

 In all times and especially in times of oppression, the key to prosperity is to remain in God’s life. Greetings to you dear brothers and sisters as we examine the topic of prosperity today. Many preachers see this subject from a purely material perspective, and thus cause many to be alienated from them due to their monolithic and often worldly philosophical approach. In the passage above, God presents to us an example of prosperity through the attitudes of Daniel and the three young men. The account itself is clear – God’s people are in exile in Persia, and the four men in question are working in government, called to follow the customs of that culture. The issue, however, was not just a cultural clash this time around for God’s people – it was that they needed to either break their covenant to stay holy or ceremonially clean by eating forbidden foods or endanger their positions or persons by refusing the King’s offered food. Our sermon today is about Daniel’s decision regarding this (which was obviously to reject the royal food). Thus, we are going to talk about this key of prospering in the time of difficulty. That key, as we said in the beginning, is to remain in the lifestyle that God has commanded and not to stray from it, no matter what. Let’s see how that plays out then and now…

 In all times, the key to being prosperous is our loyalty to God and to His calling on our lives. In the Scripture passage, Daniel was facing an important decision. He made the decision to stay faithful to the laws of God, even if his superior the King got angry and responded harshly. Daniel had decided to live separate from the culture around him – because loyalty to God entailed following the food-related laws in the Mosaic Law. The prophet Daniel was faithful to God as best as he knew how. He was ready to be excluded from everything, as long as he didn’t stray from God’s Law.

 This is like that student who experiences difficult moments when he raises his hand in history class and declares that he is a Christian in response to a question by the teacher. The teacher may say derogatory words to the boy, the classmates may mock him, but he remains steady about his faith in Christ.

 Today we find ourselves in such a time when our spiritual values are considered laughable and illogical in many circles. Perhaps in schools around your area, kids are continuing to be taught that they are little more than overdeveloped apes. Maybe in some schools, teachers or some kids are reticent to use the words “boy” or “girl”, even though those are the terms used for God’s created younger human beings. Perhaps, on the television screen, maybe in the books, or even in the restaurants, posters and signs are placed which contain messages that go against our faith. If we find ourselves in a conversation with others who do not know the Lord or are nominal Christians, will we stay quiet when it is time to speak up? If one day, a law is made that forces us as a church to declare something that is against our faith, for example, we must worship all gods and allow others to do so in our building for equality’s sake, what will we do then? Better yet, what do we do now and how does each of us stay faithful to God?

 Yes, it is true, today we are freed from the food-related laws of the Mosaic Law. When the temptation to compromise comes, however, and everyone around us is doing something against our faith, how are we different from them? What or Whom will we cling to as our standard, our God?

 Today God is looking for new Daniels to emerge in this faithless and darkened society. The Lord is calling us to be culture-shakers. Let us not be passive agents, not doing anything, enabling every kind of sin and dishonor to come to our Lord’s Name. Rather, let us speak up, express ourselves, and show our loyalty to our Lord in the times of oppression, darkness, and all kinds of difficulty.

 If we want to prosper in the Lord’s eyes and for His Kingdom, our key to prosperity is our loyalty to God and his calling. May God strengthen us, make us immovable, so that we never go with the flow, but that we cling to him loyally our whole life. The Lord bless you all. Amen.