When They Call For Compromise" – Sunday September 16
Daniel Chapter 1

Intro: I can vividly remember as a child in Ireland hearing the rattling of the milk truck early in the morning, and the rattle of the milk bottles coming off the truck and on to our front step. You could just see the chunk of cream sitting 2 or 3 inches at the top of each bottle. We used to skim off the cream from the top. When we had enough, it could be churned into butter.

I can also remember like yesterday going to the farm beside us for un-pasteurized milk. On bringing it back, mum would siphon off the cream and make a little butter, and that was something only my father got. Then along came Pasteurization and Homogenization.

Pasteurization has to do with heating the milk to a certain temperature and holding it there until certain harmful bacteria are killed.

Homogenization is the process of mixing up the milk until it has a uniform creamy consistency. We might say it’s fully blended. You can always recognize non-homogenized milk because the cream separates and comes to the top.

It occurred to me that homogenization is exactly what the world wants to do with Christians. The world wants to shake us up and blend us so effectively that there’s no longer any difference between us and them. The cream no longer comes to the top. It’s no longer a separate substance.

It reminded me of my study of the Greek Mythology story of the bed of Procrustes He had a bed, in which he invited every passer-by to spend the night, and then he set to work on them.
If you were too short, he stretched you to fit the bed. If you were too tall, he chopped your legs off to make you fit. In other words, one size fits all, just like homogenized milk – everyone the same.

Once you've been a Christian for awhile of course, you realize that, while that is what the world around you wants, it isn't what God wants. **He doesn't want the cream so mixed up with the rest of the milk that there’s no difference.**

He wants us to resist becoming “homogenized” with the world. Yet, staying with our analogy, He hasn't called us to leave the bottle of milk either.

**So how do you pull something like that off?** How do you maintain a dynamic, vibrant, no compromise faith in a world that wants to homogenize you?

The idea behind it, is this issue of not becoming homogenized with the world. In the process of the world shaking the Christian up, God wants the cream to come to the top, and not to be reduced and dispersed so it’s no longer seen.

Daniel was able to maintain a strong and dynamic faith in spite of the fact that he lived nearly his entire life in the courts of pagan kings. **I don't think resisting homogenization gets any tougher than that.**

What do you think is the most common means used by the world to homogenize Christians? Do you believe the spirit of compromise is abroad in Christendom today?

You could make an argument that at times it’s difficult to see how separate God’s people are from the world, in lifestyle, in speech, in entertainment, in viewing and reading habits.
Regrettably frivolous pastimes are sometimes indulged that threaten to deprive the Lord’s people of those things that separate them from the world.

If we can be made to abandon key aspects of our faith by compromising what we believe, homogenization will be simple and complete.

Our text this morning from Daniel 1 outlines a classic case of forced homogenization. Daniel and his three friends are forcibly taken from their homes in Jerusalem and deported to Babylon. There these godly teens underwent an enormous cultural transformation as they are trained to work for a pagan king.

“Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, his chief of staff, to bring to the palace some of the young men of Judah’s royal family and other noble families, who had been brought to Babylon as captives.

4 “Select only strong, healthy, and good-looking young men,” he said. “Make sure they are well versed in every branch of learning, are gifted with knowledge and good judgment, and are suited to serve in the royal palace. Train these young men in the language and literature of Babylon.”

5 The king assigned them a daily ration of food and wine from his own kitchens. They were to be trained for three years, and then they would enter the royal service.” Verse 3-5

I call these verses Operation Homogenization. These guys are to get the best education Babylon can offer, and step one was a full scholarship to Babylon State University, the Ivy League of the ancient world. They’re immersed in Babylonian knowledge, culture, history, language, and religion.
They would learn science, math, astrology, commerce, and history. **Step two was to offer them free food from the King’s Buffet.** It was all-you-can-eat, all the time menu. I’m sure we all understand this that even back then they knew that the way to a young man’s heart is through his stomach. **Step three involved changing their names from D S M and A.** (verses 6-7)

These Jewish teenagers were on the fast-track MBA program. **Talk about a sweet deal, this was it.** It was the kind of break most guys would jump at. And to be fair, we have to say that Nebuchadnezzar didn’t think of it as an evil thing. He probably thought he was doing these young men an incredible favour.

At the end of their training they would enter the king’s service and be assured of high-level government positions.

**By giving them new names Ashpenaz meant to obliterate their past.** This was nothing less than systematic brainwashing. Nebuchadnezzar didn’t want good Jews working for him. He wanted good Babylonians who happened to have a Jewish background.

Note that he didn’t overtly force them to change their religion. They were being weaned away from their past little by little.

Clearly, the goal was for these young men to think and act and speak like the pagans around them. And it might have worked but for one all-important fact: **You can change the outside but you can’t change the heart.**

Here is hope for all Christian parents who worry (and rightly so) about the negative influence of the world all around us. **In the end our job is to plant the seed of God’s truth and then trust God to bring in the harvest.**
Most of us know Romans 12:2, “Do not be conformed to the world.” J. B. Phillips renders it: “Don’t let the world squeeze you into its mold.” Do you hear the alarm bells ringing here? The world will squeeze us. We can’t avoid that. But we don’t have to give in to the pressure.

Here, then, is the Babylonian plan to transform these young men:

**New Home: Isolation**

**New Knowledge: Indoctrination**

**New Diet: Compromise**

**New Names: Confusion**

It’s a good plan because it evidently worked with some of the other Jewish teenagers. But there were four (at least) who stood against the tide.

Daniel decided in reviewing the King's edict that he couldn’t allow himself to become a Grade A, Pasteurized, Homogenized Pagan on the issue of loyalty to God.

What we have then, in this passage is clearly a call from the world to compromise, and it’s no different in principle than the world's call for God's people to compromise in our day. Yes, the circumstances may be different, but the issue is always the same.

Someone has written, "Compromise is always wrong when it means sacrificing principle." I agree with that statement. That was the issue here.

Not all compromise is wrong. There are times when compromise is permissible or even desirable. Here’s a dictionary definition of compromise - "A concession to something detrimental."
If and when, in an effort to assimilate you and homogenize you into the world's system, you’re called on to compromise clear principles of God's word, remember these four lessons.

1. Be Reasonable. Know the difference between wrongful compromise and allowable concession. Every call for compromise needn’t be met by strong opposition by God's people. A Christian should pick his battles carefully. It’s only when God's principles are at stake that we can refuse to be conformed.

E.G. The leader of a Gospel Male Voice Choir had a brother who was in advanced stages of Multiple Sclerosis. This brother needed care and assistance in just about every area of his life. Confined to a wheel chair, he had one of the brightest, radiant testimonies for Christ of anyone I have ever known.

A major fund raiser for MS was planned for their town, to be held in the town hall. Local musical talent was to highlight the evening, to present both sacred and secular music. A large crowd was expected.

An invitation was extended to the Gospel Choir conductor to participate on account of his brother, and he quickly accepted. This didn’t sit well with some of the choir members who thought he shouldn’t be involved in worldly events. A division occurred, but the choir leader went ahead and attended the concert.

I remember this event well, because I was one of the objectors, and I was wrong, dead wrong, o so very wrong!

I wasn’t being reasonable, and I didn’t know when we’re called to compromise, we need to know the difference between wrongful compromise and permissible concession. God taught me a lesson I’ve never forgotten.
2. **Be Resolute** when wrongful compromise is called for. The time will come to make up your mind and take your stand. **When that time comes, stand!**

**Look back at verse 8:** "But Daniel make up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank..."

After Daniel determined that this was an issue for which there could be no compromise, he gathered up every strand of his resolve and made a decision. He resolutely "**made up his mind.**" He decided in reviewing the King's edict that he could not allow himself to become a Grade A, Pasteurized, Homogenized Pagan.

3. **Be respectful** of the non-Christian around you. Remember that they need to see a good example so they too, can be saved. A resolute stand doesn't mean you should be mean-spirited and disrespectful. This is precisely where many Christians lose the battle and become just like the world.

**Verses 8b,** "...so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself."

Being right and doing right, doesn’t give us a license to be disrespectful of others. **It’s no badge of honour being called a cantankerous saint of God.**

Daniel first sought permission from the commander of the court officials to be excused from eating the king's food. Does that mean if the commander had said "no" he would have gone ahead and defiled himself with the food? **No!** But it does indicate that, whenever something can be done respectfully, it should be.

Certain verses come to my mind like Romans 12:18: "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men."
In our concern not to be homogenized, we need to remember to be respectful. If our actions in this regard are not different than any other troublemakers, we've been effectively homogenized.

4. Be resourceful. Seek out God's wisdom. Make it a habit in all matters of life. Then, when the need arises that calls for it, you will with God's help, be ready with the right answer at the right time.

An interesting thing to watch for from the window of an airplane is the winding path of the rivers below. No two waterways are alike, but they all have one thing in common: they’re all crooked. They get that way because they conform to what stands in their way. Another way to look at it’s that they follow the path of least resistance. Rivers are crooked because they take the "easy way."

We, too, can become crooked if we always take the easy way.

The things that have been suggested here today from Daniel 1 are not the easy way. They take courage, conviction, and commitment. But if we practice them, they will yield a life that is straight as God intended, and we won't be homogenized.

It reminds me of the guy Paul Harvey described in one of his “the rest of the story broadcasts”. His words were, "Remember the uncertain soldier in the American Civil War, who figuring to play it safe, dressed himself in a blue coat and gray pants and tip-toed out onto the field of battle. He got shot at from both directions."

When it comes to issues of compromise, issues where principles of faith are involved, like Daniel here, we need to be resolute. We need to make up our minds. If we don't, we'll soon be homogenized. We'll be no different than the world.
We don't avoid the world's homogenization by being a willful dim-wit to wisdom. The bodies of D - S - M and A, were in Babylon but their hearts were in Jerusalem.

They never forgot - not even for one moment - who they were and where they came from. So it didn’t matter where they happened to be - or even what names they happened to be called. The faith of their childhood was tattooed on their hearts and the mightiest man in the world was helpless to do anything about it.

How will we survive the continual onslaught of the world in our day? The same way they did - by putting our hearts in the right place. For us that means even though our bodies are on earth, our hearts must continually be in heaven. And if our hearts are in heaven, then it doesn’t matter where we happen to be on earth because the world can’t touch us.

This passage teaches us a great deal about a few subjects for you to ponder:

· The power of a good memory

· The importance of godly heritage

· The value of early training

· The call to godly courage

God used the attempted homogenization of Daniel and his friends to prepare them for greater work to come, so that they might eventually become leaders in a pagan government.

God wills that his children survive and thrive in the most difficult circumstances, so that all will know “whose we are and whom we serve.”