

the law, was unclean. But Daniel "purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself." "It is but a little thing," some might say. No, it is a great thing, for it is wrong. He refused it, and God honored the faith of the youth, and raised him to the highest dignity. All might have gone wrong with him if he had conformed to Babylon, instead of daring to be singular as a servant of God. It is a peculiar crisis with the young when the first strong temptation comes, and a little going astray may be the diverging line which will curve off from the straight road and lead to destruction.

How many young men are in the habit of doing what they know to be wrong, and plead their youth in vindication! And how many who have long since ceased to be young, endorse the plea by speaking of youth as a season when a man may be expected "to sow his wild oats"—as if there were a time in every man's life when he may, with comparative innocence, if not without blame, violate the law of God. It is not to be expected that a person in youth will manifest the gravity of age, or be distinguished by the wisdom which experience alone can teach.

One of the most prominent features in the history of Daniel is his devotion to his purpose, his earnest and unflinching decision, his uncompromising faithfulness to the object of his mission. He was raised up as a prophet in the midst of idolators, to declare the message of God to a heathen king and his licentious nobles. This was the purpose of his life, and faithfully he fulfilled it. Rising above the temptation of sense, sternly repressing the sensibility which might interfere with duty, trampling upon worldly interest, and regardless of personal aggrandisement or safety, he held on his course, unswerving and untired to the end. In everything God was his object; to glorify God his aim, to speak for God his message, to exhibit God his life. His decision and consistency never failed him. He spurned alike the adulation of the monarch and the threatenings of the noble; he neither pandered for the favor of a court, nor made unworthy compromise with the idolators of Babylon. The remembrancer of heaven, he did his work with one purpose and one heart.

In this, then, his unity of purpose, he furnishes us with a noble example. It is a freedom from tortuous policy—it is the direction of energies to the attainment of a great end. And if we look into the lives of those who have vindicated their right to be held in the world's memory, we shall find that all their actions proceed from one comprehensive principle, and point to one magnificent achievement. Look at the Apostles. There you have men, quite different in character, laboring in different localities, bringing the same Gospel to bear on different minds, and yet everywhere meeting, after many years, in that mightiest result—the establishment of the kingdom

of Christ. Much of the result is due, no doubt, to the Gospel itself, or rather to the Divine agency which applied it; but something also to the unity of the messengers, their sincere purpose and sustained endeavour. And so it is in the case of all who have been benefactors of mankind. They have had some master-purpose, which they have maintained amid hazard and suffering, and which, shrouded in the heart, has influenced and formed the life. We can express in a word the object of the world's benefactors—to bear witness for Jehovah, to extend Christianity, to disintegrate the truth for Europe, to humanise prison discipline, to abolish slavery—these are soon told; but if we open up each word, you have the life-labor of Daniel, Paul, Luther, Howard, Wilberforce—the inner man of each heart laid open, with its hopes, joys, fears, anxieties, faiths, conflicts, triumphs, in the long round of weary and wasting years.

See this principle embodied in action. Look at two scenes in the history of Daniel—the one recorded in the 5th, the other in the 6th chapter of his Prophecy.

Here then we have an instance of remarkable decision, appearing most conspicuously in his whole life. While this is frequently the result of natural constitution, it may be fostered by moral training, and is always strengthened by high moral principle. When this is the case, it appears as a clear, strong conviction leading to prompt, energetic action; it is an unflinching adherence to what the judgment pronounces to be right, at all hazards and at whatever cost; it is the inflexible perseverance which no difficulty, no defeat, no disaster can ever cause to relinquish for a moment the purpose it has intelligently formed. Generally considered, it is essential to character of every kind. Your hearts are set on success. Whatever may be the course you have chosen or are about to choose, however varied your pursuits, success is the goal which you wish to reach. And let me tell you that, without decision, success in any undertaking cannot be achieved. The wavering man, however favorable his circumstances, invariably fails—the man of unbending decision, however formidable the opposition with which he has to contend, generally succeeds. Obstacles disappear at his bidding, mountains become plains before him, hostile influences are pressed into his service, and reverses are made the stepping-stones to victory.

Now see the decision which characterised Daniel, and all who like him have been placed in positions of danger, exposed to ridicule and reproach, and exciting the suspicion and jealousy of their neighbours. Christianity, if true, is everything, and warrants and commands every sacrifice of self to promote its influence. Such is the principle on which the most noble Christians on earth have acted,—such was the principle on which Tyndale, Hale, Baxter, Wilberforce, Howard, and Whitfield framed their lives. They showed themselves in

every important step of their history to be men whom nothing could induce to sacrifice principle to policy, who would not forsake the straight line of duty for the bye-paths of expediency, who would not be turned aside from the purpose they had prayerfully formed by the opposition of foes or the alienation of friends. Others might temporize from a regard to consequences, and shape their course to escape the frowns or receive the smiles of men; but with these men right was right, irrespective of man's opinion, and by the right they would abide, whether others smiled or frowned.

Such a character as this cannot be too highly commended. The young man for this or any age must know how to take his stand on the rock of right, and remain there, breasting the storm if need be, looking with calm and unflinching eye over the raging billows, heedless of the thunder's distant muttering, or the lightning's nearer flash. We must scorn the false prudence which dares not act until it asks, What will others say or think? If the action be right, what does it matter? You are no man, if the fear of ridicule or rejection can turn you from the course you believe to be right. You must learn to resist them as the rock the dashing wave. Not that we would have you scorn others or treat their opinions with contempt, but only looking at the work to be done, you should lose sight of personal consequences. You may honor man while you prove faithful to truth; you may look lovingly on others, while you cleave to the right. Can it be done safely, did you say? Safely! There is a God who controls the affairs of men; right is stronger than wrong—truth than falsehood. Safely! To be sure you can. Temporary inconvenience, present loss you may have to sustain, but in the end you are safe—right will triumph over wrong, good over evil. Safely! what though you could not? Better to die doing right than live by doing wrong. Safely! They are only the craven and faint-hearted that suggest danger and inexpediency; the truly brave man only asks, Is it right? Stand by the right. Though the world should assail, though friends should misunderstand, though your firmness should be mistaken for obstinacy, and your faithfulness for conceit—though difficulties should thicken around you, still remain faithful to duty, immovable as the rock, defiant and brave. Be true to the right as the eagle to his aim; pass through clouds of detraction unhurt by the shafts of malice, until, standing with the storm beneath your feet, you enjoy the calm which flows from the voice of an approving conscience, and bask in the blissful smile of the God whom you adore.

To render this decision on your part praiseworthy, it must be accompanied by and based on sober-mindedness. He only can pursue a straight-forward course, and aim steadfastly at a given object, who is confident that he has judged rightly; and this judgment is only becoming when the