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The beauty of folly
Preaching Daniel 1:1–21 in a context of corruption

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Abstract

This chapter discuss how preaching may be used to curb the menace of corruption in Nigeria. It employs a biblical account of Daniel and his friends who for the sake of their Jewish faith refused the royal food and royal wine and instead they requested vegetables and ordinary water. In a context where individualism, selfishness, bribery, embezzlement, hoarding of wealth, dishonesty is prominent, what Daniel and his friends did would have been consider as a foolish act. However, the life of Daniel and his three friends revealed that there is beauty in acting like a fool. Therefore, this chapter argues that preaching in a context of corruption demands encouraging people to dedicate their hearts to God, encouraging people to believe that God can be trusted in all situations and that He is able to bless and deliver those who trust him. Preaching in a context of corruption demands encouraging people to be the kind of people whose actions stand to encourage persuasive abstinence from corruption. This is necessary for the stimulating and participating in societal transformation through refusing to be selfishness, giving and receiving of a bribe, embezzlement, hoarding of wealth and refusing to be dishonest in all situations.

Keywords

Preaching; beauty; folly; corruption

1. Introduction

The definition of key words

Preaching

According to Pieterse (2001:ix) "Preaching in its very core, is very situational: Preaching is the communication of God's word to people in their particular context." Hall (1971:109) says that "Preaching is a bifocal

and two-dimensional activity, connecting both the realities of human existence and the content and meaning of the gospel of Christ. Hall further argues that "preaching happens when the preacher is both honestly involved in the conditions and situations of the listeners and genuinely identified with the source of Christian faith – the biblical text." As such, preaching in a context of corruption means using the Word of God to discourage people from selfishness, giving and receiving of bribe, embezzlement, hoarding of wealth, and dishonesty. Preaching in a context of corruption is the ability to use the word of God to empower people to do good works that are motivated by love for God and their neighbour. To help believers to demonstrate actions and behaviours of Jesus in their day to day activities.

Beauty

According to Cilliers (2013:259–260) "There are different ways people view and interpret beauty. Some people view beauty through a haze of romanticism. Beauty is all about objects (or experiences) that are fine, excellent, noble and honourable. Some people see beauty as the pretty, the merely decorative, or the inoffensively pleasant – its intention being nothing more than merely evoking a sentimental feeling about pretty sunsets and artistic flower arrangements." In addition, Cilliers notes that "For some, beauty is considered exclusively in terms of physical and even hedonistic and narcissistic trends: beauty then becomes a slogan for 'lifestyle' advertisements and cosmetic make-overs. Beauty becomes nothing more than a naked woman advertising perfume." Cilliers' observation that beauty is viewed and interpreted differently is apt because some people in Nigeria are attracted by the lifestyle of corrupt people, the type of cars they drive, the houses they live in, the food they eat and the kind of respect the corrupt society accorded such people. To such kind of people corruption is a form of beauty. Sadly, the classic connection between beauty, goodness, and truth, has been fully shattered.

Therefore, beauty in this study is much more than just the pretty, the merely decorative, or the inoffensively pleasant (Cilliers 2013:40). Lamp (2005) puts it that "Beauty is good works motivated by love for God and neighbour (1 Tim 1:5; 1 Pet 1:22; 1 Jn 4:7–5:3). Beauty is a commitment to please God, honour God and be like God." Similarly, Williams (2014) sees beauty as good works found in someone who commits his or her life to

Christ. That is "Beauty is a heart motivated by a love of God and a love of our neighbour, which can only be found in someone who has trusted Christ as their Saviour." Williams believes that "beauty is actions and behaviours of Jesus Christ that are demonstrated by believers who are diligently seeking to become like Christ." Therefore, it can be argued that beauty is the ability to refuse being selfishness, giving and receiving of bribe, embezzlement, hoarding of wealth, and dishonesty for sake of honouring God and love for the neighbour.

Folly

The Greek term for folly is "moria" and the English translation is "moron". According to Campbell and Cilliers (2012:28) "Moria designated the attitude and behaviour of a particular social type: the lower-class person who exhibited a weak and deficient intellect, often combined with physical grotesqueness." In this article however, folly designate figurative attitude, uniquely situates to challenge societal convention. In other words, folly means to intentionally deviate from conventional modes of behaviour in order to challenge and change existing expectations and structural realities. In the words of Mills (2015:2):

> The Fool acknowledges implicitly and explicitly that there are particular social realities that do not provide a sufficient context for human flourishing. In fact, the Fool works to expose the structural realities and cultural norms that keep people bound in myriad ways. Fundamentally, the Fool's actions signify a prophetic critique of the status quo.

Folly in the context of corruption is fundamentally unconventional actions in comparison to dominant expectations of religious, political, and social life of the day. Folly in a context of corruption is an act of choosing to transgress the cultural norms of individualism, selfishness, bribery, embezzlement, hoarding of wealth, dishonesty for the sake of honouring God and promoting human well-being (Mills 2015:2). Today in Nigeria it is only fools that will have the courage and the determination to stand up and tell the truth, expose lies, and bear witness to truth and justice. It is only fools that will refuse taking or giving of bribe, refuse embezzling public property, refuse hoarding of wealth and refuse being dishonest. The action of Daniel and his three friends in Daniel 1:1–21 mirrored folly in a context

of corruption. They exhibited the attitude of socially ostracized, low and despised moron in order to challenge and change existing expectations and structural realities of corruption.

Corruption

Dike (2008) supposes that "Corruption has broadly been defined as a perversion or a change from good to bad. Corruption or corrupt behaviour involves the violation of established rules for personal gain or profit." For Vorster (2011:1), "Corruption is the misuse of a public office or a position of authority for private material or social gain at the expense of other people." Uwaifo (2018:2) posits that "Corruption is an act of human conduct and activity, carried out by people who are entrusted or who occupy position of authority and responsibility and by their greed and selfishness betrayed the public trust and confidence repose on them by the public for private and personal gains." Furthermore, Dieudonne who believes corruption sometimes involves a third party who may not hold power, says that:

> Corruption is the act of committing or inciting to commit acts that constitute an abuse of a function or an abuse of authority. As it is for any person intentionally to offer, promise or give any undue pecuniary advantage, directly or through intermediaries to a public official or private. This in profit of a third party for that third party to act or refrain from acting in the exercise of his official functions (Dieudonne cited in Leonard 2013:7).

In this study however, I would like to argue that corruption happens from the mind, from the thoughts human beings allow to make their home in their hearts. Thoughts that emanates from believing that life depends on the amount of wealth one has accumulated. People become corrupt when they believe Satan's lie that life depends on the abundance they have. When they have wealth in abundance, they can do everything possible unhindered, with alright autonomy. Therefore, people become susceptible to corruption when they believe Satan's lies that hoarding of wealth will enable them to overcome all lacks, all impediments, all human limitations, and to be free of all natural and human tragedies, calamities, lacking nothing at all in terms of ability, strength, power and authority. Human beings can do and undo. Human beings can achieve all the desires of their heart without any

hindrance and without reference to a transcendent being (Agang 2019:9–10).

2. Perspectives on corruption in Nigeria

Nigeria has the reputation of being a deeply religious country. McCain (2008) asserts that "there is a church on every corner in Nigeria … And that there is no more sleeping in any Nigeria city again after 5:00. This is as a result of the early daily call on the Muslim faithful to prayer." In 2012, Nigeria was declared the most religious country in the world by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). The survey tagged "What the world thinks of God", covers countries such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Israel, India, South Korea, Indonesia, Nigeria, Russia, Mexico and Lebanon. Nigeria came top, with 90% of the population believing in God, praying regularly and affirming their readiness to die on behalf of their belief (Omomia 2015:60). The Nigeria society however, is replete with corruption because people lack the readiness to die on behalf of the God of the religion they professed. The observation of the following people further explains why corruption thrives and even flourishes in Nigeria:

Uwaifo (2018:2) notes that "People in Nigeria are noted to be a very religious people but also very ungodly, because in their daily conduct and behaviour they ignore the basic teachings of their faith, this is reflected in their daily dealings with one another, stealing and embezzlement of public funds in the various sectors of the economy." By this Uwaifo situates corruption in human inability to put into practice the basic teaching of their faith. Similarly, Daniel (2017:3) believes that corruption is pandemic in Nigeria because "The capacities of human beings are used to advance and serve the self and also as power to dominate others." In other words, believing that hoarding of wealth will enable people to overcome all lacks is making people use their positions, wealth, authority, and even knowledge to exploit and take advantage of one another. This is the kind of corruption that people encounter daily at places like hospitals, schools, bus stops, markets, police stations, offices and in every aspect of life in Nigeria (Daniel 2017:3). In addition, Walt (2003:63) and Bauer (2000:218) avers that corruption thrives and blossoms in Nigeria because people make money and material wealth semi-gods. Economic activity, success and material gain have become

ends in themselves. People are subordinating and exploiting others for economic purposes. Materialism and consumerism erode both traditional and Christian morals. Hedonism (seeking only my own pleasure) has usurped commitment to God and the well-being of others (Walt 2003:63; Bauer 2000:218).

Kukah (1999) described the Nigeria society as a "Dark Temple", meaning one cannot confidently buy things in the market because one is not sure whether they are fake or not. One cannot confidently take drugs prescribed in the hospital because one is not sure whether the drugs are prescribed by a fake doctor or not. One cannot confidently vote for a candidate because one is not sure whether he or she will deliver the campaign promises or not. The situation of corruption in Nigeria can well be described by the proverb that says "Before you say good morning, you must first of all look at the sun" meaning one must do everything with caution (Kukah 1999).

3. Background of Daniel 1: 1–21

Veiss (2016:45) introduced Daniel 1:1–21 with the assertion that "The assimilation attempts by King Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel's response, highlights God superiority and sovereignty. God was the ultimate ruler over Nebuchadnezzar." This means Daniel 1:1–21 and invariably the Book of Daniel pictures God as the one true God, and that He is sovereign over the affairs of humanity and history. Yahweh the God of Israel is sovereign over the Babylonian gods and their kings. The fortunes of kings and the affairs of men are subject to God's decrees, and that He is able to accomplish His will despite the most determined opposition of the mightiest rulers on earth (Contable 2019:6).

God allowed the Babylonians to defeat Israel because Israel disobeyed God's command and worshiped other gods. In other words, what make the Israelites to be taken into captivity was disobedience, which is the collapse of true religion and the enthronement of corruption in Israel. People worshipped God the way they wanted to and not the way He commanded them in the law. Therefore, according to Daniel 1, in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the vessels of the house of God; and

he brought them to the land of Shinar; to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god. In Babylon Israel faced the temptation of adopting to the lifestyle of the Babylonians.

4. Daniel and his three friends and the challenge of corruption (Dan 1:3–7)

According to Ferguson (1988:30) "Babylon and Jerusalem represent the two cities to which men and women belong. They symbolize the two loyalties of which scripture speak in many different word pictures: two gates, two ways, two masters. As such, Babylon and Jerusalem are opposed to one another." The two gates, two ways and two masters that Ferguson considered Babylon and Jerusalem to be, is portrayed in Daniel 1:3–7. Daniel and his three friends faced the temptation to maintain their Jerusalem identity or compromise their identity by adopting to the lifestyle of Babylon. Daniel and his three friends encountered the temptation to worship and honour God or to honour Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians gods. They were confronted by the temptation to believe the word of God and obey the word of God or to believe the word of Nebuchadnezzar and the gods of Babylon. The temptation that Daniel and his three friends faced is more or less the same with the challenge of corruption. Therefore, Daniel and his three friends' challenge of corruption comes to us at three levels.

Firstly, the king ordered that Daniel and his three friends should be educated for three years, at the end of which they were to enter the king's personal service. Daniel and his friends were taught a new language and new ways of looking at life in Babylon. Ferguson (1988:35) believes that "the aim of the course in Chaldean language and literature, however, was not merely academic. It was to retain their minds to think as Babylonians rather than Israelites." Ferguson is right in saying that the knowledge aimed at making them to think and act like Babylonians. One can add that the knowledge Daniel and his three friends acquired in Babylon aimed at making them to conform to the new world around them.

In addition, the king ordered that Daniel and his friends receive a daily ration from the king's choice food and from the wine which he drank. All their lives, Daniel and his three friends lived by the food laws handed down by the Lord. Now, they are faced with new food. Most likely, the food was

very attractive and far better than what they had in Jerusalem. In the words of Hughes (2016:22–23): "The word used in the Hebrew for 'food' is not one of the common words used to represent food eaten at a meal, such as 'bread' or 'flesh/meat'. Rather it is, apparently, a Persian word that seems to have the sense of 'fine' or 'rich' food. It is used only in this verse and in Daniel 11.26." Wood (1973:34) says that "The phrase translates literally: from the portion or assignment meaning from the very food which the king ate. Such food would have been the finest." Similarly, Pierce (2015:17) believes that "The king and his dinner guests were among those who received the richest of dishes, such as meats like pork and horseflesh." Therefore, it can be argued that Daniel and his three friends were treated as part of the royal staff. They were given a special status to share the food of the king.[1] Such opportunity would have been humanly difficult to turn down. Such opportunity would have place them in a situation of choosing between two loyalties, two gates, two ways, two masters.

Furthermore, Daniel and his three friends' wonderful names that carried testimony to the person of God were changed. They were given new names with different meanings so they might forget their former religion and country. Daniel became Belteshazzar, which means, "Bel will protect". Hananiah became Shadrach, which means, "Inspiration of the sun". Mishael became Meshach, which means, "Belonging to Aku". Azariah became Abednego, which means "Servant of Nego". In regard to the motive behind changing the names of the four Hebrew youths Constable (2019:27) aptly explains that "The practice of changing names was a way to express sovereign control over others. These new names would have also encouraged these youths to think of themselves as part of the culture in which they were living, rather than the culture from which they had come."

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1 The studies by William (2012:18) on the type food eaten in Babylon during the time of Daniel gives more insight about how foolish it seems for Daniel and his three friends to refuse the king's food. He discovered that Babylonians enjoyed a rich and varied diet. They ate grain and dates which were their staple food in this period. Among the grains, barley was the main cereal because it tolerated a slightly saline soil but they also grew wheat, emmer and millet. Fruits and vegetables included dates, pomegranates, grapes, figs, lentils, chickpeas, beans, turnips, leeks, cucumbers, watercress, lettuce, onions and garlic. Cattle, sheep and goats provided meat, milk, cheese, hides and fabrics. The rivers, canals and the sea also provided fish in abundance.

The writer of Daniel did not explain king Nebuchadnezzar's intention for the education, royal food and the change of the four Hebrew names. This has sparked a lot of interpretations. For example, Chia (1996:175) believes that "The purpose of the education, royal food and change of names was for maximizing efficiency of the Babylonian ruler." Veiss (2016:48) thinks that "The purpose of the king's food, new names, and education was total indoctrination." Pfeiffer (1976:462) describes Nebuchadnezzar action as modern techniques of brain washing." Whatever was the intention of King Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel and his three friends faced a situation common to every Christian in Nigeria. They could be part of the crowd and submit to societal pressure of corruption to get ahead. Or they could do what they knew would please their God though it might involve persecution and cost them advancement opportunities.

However, Daniel and his three contemporaries' resolution formed the basis for considering them as a model for non-compromised in a context of corruption. The decision accounted for the unusual success in an ungodly society. Daniel and his three friends resolved not to defile themselves with the king's cunning strategy (Dan 1:8). Such decision in a context of corruption would have been consider a foolish act.

5. The folly of Daniel and his three friends (Dan 1:8–16)

As bad as things may be and as worse as conditions may be, fools always have the courage to stand up and tell the truth, expose lies, and bear witness to truth and justice. Fools are always willing to hold unto what is right (Cornel West cited in Mills 2015:71). It is on this basis that the study considers Daniel and his three friends' action in Daniel 1:8–16 as folly. In Daniel 1:8 we read that "Daniel and his three friends resolved not to defile themselves." According to Hughes (2016:27) "He determined that he would not eat the food from the king's table (1.5)." In the words of Wood (1973:36) "The thought is that Daniel, having made a decision not to eat the king's food, place this decision on his heart, thus putting himself under full obligation to act according to it." In a society in which corruption is a culture Daniel and his three friends' decision picture them as fools, or what is commonly called Mumu in Nigeria.

The Bible does not tell us the reason why Daniel and his friends refused the king's food and the wine. This had sparked a lot of arguments by Old Testament scholars. For example, Jamieson (1997) says that "it was the custom to throw a small part of the viands and wine upon the earth, as an initiatory offering to the gods, so as to consecrate to them the whole entertainment." Jamieson argues further that "to have partaken of such a feast would have been to sanction idolatry and was forbidden even after the legal distinction of clean and unclean meats was done away (1 Cor 8:7, 10)." Hughes (2016:28) opines that:

> The food and wine were consecrated to idols and eating; and drinking would have been to participate in, and would be viewed as endorsing, a pagan religious ritual. The meat served at the king's table would have been dedicated to a false god through sacrifice, and the wine would have been declared sacred through a libation of pouring. Sharing in the meal would have been sharing in the sacrifice and libation and honouring the idol.

Constable (2019:28) believes that "Daniel wanted to please the Lord in every respect, not just in the most important moral aspects of his life (cf. 1 Cor. 10:1–4, 6, 14). Undoubtedly the meat ("food") and wine that they refused had been offered to the Babylonian gods (Marduk [or Bel], Nebo, Ishtar, etc.), since it came from the king's table."

However, in this study I would like to argue that Daniel and his three friends were in the process of education and preparation for service. Their minds as well as their bodies were being fed by the Babylonian court. If they succeed it will be attributed to the Babylonians effort and gods. Therefore, Daniel and his three friends refused the food and the wine of the king because they know it is not the king who is responsible to make them healthy, better nourished and intellectually sound. Thus, their faith in a God who is able to do all things was very instrumental to their resolute abstinence from the king's delicacies (Longman 1999:53). Daniel's request to Ashpenaz attests to this fact. They requested to be given ordinary water and vegetables. Daniel and his three friends' request might have been contrary to the expectation of the king. This is expressed in Ashpenaz's objection to the request. Wood (1973:39) opines that "Ashpenaz feared that a variation in menu might bring a poorer condition of health to the four, which would show in a

saddened facial appearance." This means Ashpenaz's objection was that if Daniel, and his friends, did not partake of the perceived well-balance for good health, food and drink, they might show signs of malnourishment – looking worse being dejected or out of humour compared with their peers in the training program (Hughes 2016:30).

6. The beauty of Daniel and his three friends' folly (Dan 1:17–21)

Daniel and his three friends' folly meant the separation in heart and life from the defiling evils around them. Therefore, the beauty of Daniel and his three friends' folly in the Daniel 1:17–21 is pictured in three ways. Firstly, God makes king Nebuchadnezzar delicacies to be of less value than the ordinary diet they requested. Daniel and his three friends trusted in God rather than the idolatrous Babylonians' provision. They requested to be given ordinary water and vegetables for ten days. At the end of the ten days the food that had been sacrificed to idols was proven to be of less value than the diet God provided to the godly men. The Babylonian gods were, in effect, shown to have less power than Yahweh. Hughes (2016:33) avers that "the diet that Daniel and his friends ate made them appear healthier than their peers. Literally, the Hebrew says, "good/better in appearance and fatter of flesh". Hughes further argues that "the term 'fat', when used in the Bible does not necessarily mean 'obese' but rather can have the simple idea of being healthy. God blessed Daniel and his three friends because they followed His will and because He wanted to demonstrate his power over the Babylonians deities."

Another beauty of Daniel and his three friends' folly is God gave them wisdom and understanding above their peers. God gave Daniel and his three friends' knowledge and understanding that made them ten times better than Babylonians magicians and enchanters. According to Pierce (2015:23) "The Hebrew words used to describe their gifts are 'knowledge' (*madda*), 'insight' (*sakali*; NIV: 'understanding'), 'wisdom' (*hokmah*; NIV: 'learning'), and 'discernment' (*bin*; NIV: 'understanding')."[2] In Jewish

2 Wood gave more insight about the gift that God gave Daniel and his three friends, when he said that "the context of this verse calls for 'wisdom' to refer to the general area of subject matter concerned at any given time, and 'understanding' to the intellectual

theological tradition, wisdom is learned through decades of purposeful, daily living in the light of Torah. But in this context God gave Daniel and his three friends wisdom in a short time and at a young age (Pierce 2015:23). Longman (1999:54) believes that "God gave the four Judeans knowledge and understanding. Nebuchadnezzar and those involved in their education would take credit for their brilliance, but Daniel and others would know to whom the credit was due." Above all God gave Daniel and his three friends knowledge and wisdom ten times better than the Babylonians magicians and enchanters to demonstrate that Yahweh the God of Israel is incomparable with the Babylonian gods.

Furthermore, the beauty of Daniel and his friends' folly is that God gave Daniel a special understanding of visions and dreams. Pierce (2015:23) explains that "In Mesopotamian tradition this was acquired through a lifelong study of cultic text, yet God pre-empts the pagan process with spiritual endowment, anticipating the demonstration of God's grace toward Daniel in future challenges (2:19–23, 30; 4:18; 5:11–16)." During the time of Daniel pagan devised methods for determining the will of the gods and serious attention was given to the methods by the magicians and enchanters. In the case of Daniel however, God replaces the Babylonian methodology with His own enabling gift (Wood 1973:43).

7. Preaching the beauty of folly in a context of corruption

In the Nigerian context of corruption, Daniel and his friends' decision could have been termed as foolishness. Friends, co-workers, relations and people close to them would have told them to their face that they are fools or Mumu. This is because they refused what many Nigerians would consider as a one chance opportunity. They refused the very food which the king ate, "fine" or "rich" food, the richest of dishes, food very attractive and far better than what they had in Jerusalem.

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capacity required for dealing with it properly." Wood further argues that "Since the four young men are compared with 'magicians and enchanters,' whose main work involved counselling, it is likely that the principal matters in view concern those in which they were asked to give counsel. This give the full thought: In respect to every subject area (whether scientific, governmental, military, etc.) in which counselling was requested and which required keen understanding for giving the best advice, Daniel and his three friends were ten times better than others (Wood 1973:46).

The study considers Daniel and his three friends' decision akin to Paul's decision in 1 Corinthians 1:18–25 where he consider himself a fool for Christ. According Campbell and Cilliers (2012:45) "the fool in the context of Paul is identified with most extreme social outcasts and those on margins." This means Daniel and his friends took on the role of the socially ostracized, low and despised moron for the sake of honouring God in a corrupt society.

Daniel and his three friend's decision of taking the position of socially ostracized, low and despised moron to honour God in a corrupt society models what preaching in a context where individualism, selfishness, bribery, embezzlement, hoarding of wealth, dishonesty entails. Daniel and his three friends' refusal to participate in the wrong of the society reveals what preaching in a context of corruption should emphasise, because they faced a situation common to every Christian in Nigeria. Williams (2012:10) gives more understanding why it apt to preach the story of Daniel and his friends in a context of corruption. "It is extremely important that the Christian learns from Daniel and his three friends as to how to conduct oneself properly in the devil's world and among ungodly people with ungodly attitudes and ideas." Therefore, Daniel and his three friends' action models the beauty of folly (the type of lifestyle) that preaching in a context of corruption should promote. The study considers the following as the beauty of Daniel and his three friends' folly that preaching in a context of corruptions in Nigeria should advocate.

8. Dedication of heart to God

Dedication of heart to God is the panacea to the ill of corruption. Dedication of heart to God promotes selflessness, sincerity, integrity, truthfulness, responsibility, accountability, justice, respect for life and human dignity (Chukwu 1996). Dedication of heart to God empowers people to refuse giving of bribe, taken of bribe and hording of wealth at the expense of the public. Dedication of hearts to God will enable people to overcome the dangerous passion for easy wealth and luxury and lack of appetite for hard work and commitment to duties as well as the looting of public resources and capital in Nigeria. In other words, when people dedicate their hearts

to God, they will have the power to overcome greed, selfishness, bribery, embezzlement, and all forms of dishonesty (Kyambalesa 2006).

The Nigerian context of corruption is in desperate need of fools – people who dedicate their hearts to God, people who challenge the status quo, people who will rock the systemic boat of corruption and people who will break the cages in which people have become so comfortable with corruption (Mills 2015:71). This is because the inability of people to dedicate their hearts to God in Nigeria causes what Dike (2008) described as "The slow movement of files in offices (undue bureaucratic procedures), police extortion, tollgates and slow traffic on the highways, port congestion, queues at ATM, poor facilities in hospitals, ghost workers syndrome, and election irregularities, among others." In addition, people's inability to commit their heart to God makes politicians in Nigeria lie shamelessly in public and people support and celebrate them because of religion or tribal sentiment. Those capable of saying no to corruption are easily getting caught in the web (Ige 2016:577–578).

Daniel and his three friends made up their mind that they were going to live for the Lord in a corrupt socio-political religious society. They allowed nothing to change them or make them compromised their walk with God. They stuck to their guns more than once; in chapter 3, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were willing to die rather than compromise. In chapter 6, Daniel risked death in the lion's den rather than compromise his walk with God. In the words of Sendriks (2014) "It is hard to imagine the level of faith that it takes to trust in God when one is facing death in a furnace of blazing fire or a lion's den." Similarly, William (2012:12) avers that "Daniel trusts God's word even though it could have resulted in his death. He is obedient regardless of the consequences. His circumstances seemed impossible and even frightening to him. He trusted that God would do what is right and what was best for him in Babylon." In the same manner Christians in Nigeria need the same level of trust in God to resist, fight, and overcome the temptation and the seduction of corruption. In a society that corruption has become a culture, there is need for strong resolution and commitment to the Lord because it will enable character formation and discernment of what is right and what is wrong, what is acceptable or unacceptable with the sole aim of honouring God and promoting human well-being (Obasola

2003: 203). This shows that society is safe in as much as people dedicate their hearts to God, which is the greatest need in Nigeria.

9. Radical belief in God

Daniel and his three friend's refusal to eat the king's food was a radical trust in God because their decision involved high risk of losing many things including their lives. William (2012:12) highlighted three things that Daniel and his three friends risked in their action. Firstly, refusing to eat from Nebuchadnezzar's fine food and to drink his fine wine could deny them advancement in Babylonian society. Secondly, the decision could result in their expulsion from the three-year program of learning Babylonian literature and language, which upon completion would have resulted in their becoming dignitaries in Nebuchadnezzar's court. Thirdly, the decision could have very well cost them their lives because king Nebuchadnezzar would have considered their decision insulting to him (William 2012:12). However, Daniel and his three friends knew that God is with his people wherever they are. As such they trust in God and God manifested his power in their life by making king Nebuchadnezzar's delicacies to be of less value than the ordinary diet they requested. They requested to be given ordinary water and vegetables for ten days. At the end of the ten days the food that had been sacrificed to idols was proven to be of less value than the diet God provided to the godly men. The Babylonian gods were, in effect, shown to have less power than Yahweh because Daniel and his three friends trusted in God. In the words of William (2012:19) "The Lord rewarded Daniel and his friends for their perseverance, which is steady persistence in a course of action, a purpose, and a state and suggests activity maintained in spite of intense pressure, difficulties, steadfast and long continued application."

Therefore, Christians in Nigeria need to cultivate a culture of being aware that God is with his people wherever they are. The culture of being aware that God is with his people wherever they are will help Christians in Nigeria to resist the temptations of corruption that they faced daily in the society. This means when Christians know that God is with them in things like, political appointment, positions, place of work, offices, businesses they will honour God and promote human well-being (Agang 2016:8). Daniel

and his three friends' radical belief in God caused them to be faithful and to honour God in all areas of their lives. Believers in Nigeria should be encouraged by Daniel and his three friends' example to be loyal citizens and conscientious, faithful in all areas of life (Theron and Lotter 2012:106). Radical believe in God will make people in Nigeria consider things like political appointments, positions, places of work, offices, businesses as opportunities to serve God with all their soul, with all their heart and with all their strength.

In addition, the story of Daniel and his friends revealed that God can be trusted in all situations because He is able to reward those who trust him. For example, in Daniel 1:17–21 God blessed Daniel and his three friends with good health, wisdom and ability to interpret dreams because they trusted him. William (2012:21) notes that "God rewarded Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah for their faithfulness by giving them secret knowledge as well as skill in each and every type of literature and branch of wisdom. God distinguished Daniel from his three friends by giving him discernment with regards to each and every type of vision and dreams." This means in a context where individualism, selfishness, bribery, embezzlement, hoarding of wealth, dishonesty is prominent, the lives of Daniel and his three friends is proof that God is able to bless and deliver those who trust in him. In a society where corruption is rampant people can depend on God for good health, promotion, success in business, success in studies and daily provisions because he had proven that he can be trusted (Constable 2019:30).

10. Willingness to honour God in all situations

Sendricts (2014) made a profound observation concerning the Book of Daniel which I consider very important to preaching the story of Daniel and his three friends in the context of corruption. He said that "It is clear to see that the book of Daniel demonstrates that if a person is seeking to glorify God with all his personality, then God will definitely help him to succeed." Sendricts observation is apt because the Daniel 1–6 pictured how four Hebrew young men were willing to honour God even if it means suffering and death. For example, in Daniel 1:8 we see that "Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief

official for permission not to defile himself this way." In Daniel 3:16–18, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego told Nebuchadnezzar that they will not serve his gods or worship the image of gold he had set up. Furthermore, when Daniel learned that a decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before (6:10). Daniel and his three friends were willing to suffer physical harm for the sake of honouring God. Constable (2019:73) summarizes Daniel and his three friends' commitment to honour in all situations in the following words "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego loved Yahweh more than life itself. Not only had they learned to recite the Shema but they made it the centre of their lives. For them the will and glory of Yahweh meant more than fame, position, or security."

Nigeria is in dire need of people like Daniel and his three friends – the kind of people whose actions stand to induce the strong determination necessary for stimulating and participating in a resolute commitment to honour God, one that may bring about social change. This is because fighting corruption demands willingness to bear physical harm and the psychological weight of being constantly ostracized, criticized, and even labelled a fool for the sake of honouring God. The trials of being committed to honour God in a corrupt society is many because corrupt systems have much at stake (Agang 2019:3). As such Nigeria is in dire need of those who are committed to honouring God in all situations, those who are willing to endure the trials because they have the capacity to envision a reality beyond the foreclosed realities initiated by corrupt systems. In other words, Nigeria needs people who will envision reality beyond that which is immediately present. Nigeria needs people whose language and actions emanate from the reality of emancipation from corruption. (Mills 2015:96–97).

Therefore, preaching in a context of corruption demands encouraging people to be committed to honouring God in all situations. That is to encourage people to be the kind of people whose actions stand to encourage the persuasive abstinence from corruption that is necessary for stimulating and participating in societal transformation. Preaching in a context of corruption should encourage people to be willing to bear physical harm and the psychological burden of being constantly disliked, criticized, and even considered fools for refusing to partake in corrupt acts. Through

preaching, people should be helped to acquire the vision of a better life, rather than believing Satan's lies that life depends on the abundance that one has (Mills 2015:97). Preaching should help people to know, understand and believe that life will be much better, safer, secure and enjoyable without corruption. People should be encouraged to rather be willing to suffer and die for the sake of honouring God than being corrupt for personal gain.

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