

# LESSONS FROM DANIEL: A MAN OF GREAT COURAGE [1]

**INTRODUCTION:** Suppose that a young man, who is a Christian, enlisted in the military and is sent to a foreign country. Perhaps he's stationed in a country where there is no faithful church. What will he do? Will he make the effort to worship the Lord on the first day of the week and try to teach others the gospel? Should we excuse his not worshipping God on the basis of his youth and circumstances? We see youth placed in similar circumstances in the book of Daniel.

In approximately 605 BC, in the *"third year of Jehoiakim king of Judah"*, Daniel was taken into Babylonian captivity. (Daniel 1:1) He was in the first of three deportations. Daniel was one of the young aristocrats taken into captivity and given special training to serve the king of Babylon. (1:1-4) Other Jewish captives were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. (1:6,7) These were young, healthy, handsome and intelligent young men.

Daniel means, "'God is my judge'...The youths were probably from 12 to 15 years of age at the time when they were carried captive." (*ISBE, Vol 2, p. 782*) "Deported to Babylon at the age of sixteen, and hand-picked for government service, Daniel becomes God's prophetic mouthpiece to the gentile and Jewish world declaring God's present and eternal purpose... He is one of the few well-known Bible characters about whom nothing negative is written. His life was characterized by faith, prayer, courage, consistency, and lack of compromise." (*Introduction to Daniel, New King James Version, The Open Bible, p, 864*)

In preparation to serve the king, these young men were given a daily portion of the king's food for three years. (1:5) There was something about this food that would defile a Jew. Perhaps this food was sacrificed to idols, included unclean meat, or intoxicating beverages. (Lev. 11:1-3) "Daniel and his companions, however, remained true to their ancestral faith, courteously refusing 'the king's dainties' (1:8, tainted with idolatry and contrary to the Levitical purity-laws)." (*Zondervan, p. 197*)

## I. **"BUT DANIEL PURPOSED IN HIS HEART THAT HE WOULD NOT DEFILE HIMSELF..." (1:8)**

A. Daniel's courageous example of faithfulness to the Lord is all the more remarkable when we consider his circumstances

1. He was away from home. Many young people, who are faithful under parental supervision, reject the Lord when they get out on their own
2. He risked his position to be faithful to God
  - a. His decision not to eat the king's food endangered his position as an advisor to the king
  - b. He could be killed, put in prison, or demoted to a common field laborer
  - c. He could have thought, "Who will listen to a teenager?"; "I might as well keep quiet."; "I'm lucky to be alive and chosen to serve the king."
3. He risked the lives of others to be faithful to God (1:9,10)
4. His faithfulness was in matters which most would consider trivial

B. Daniel had purposed in his heart to be faithful to the Lord

1. He knew that faithfulness to God does not occur by accident
2. It requires commitment, sacrifice, and predetermined resolution
  - a. Colly Caldwell asked me, from the pulpit, where I would be on a Wednesday night sometime in the future when 7:30 p.m. rolled around. He then said that he knew I would be worshipping the Lord with the saints because I had already purposed in my mind to be there.
  - b. Where will you be five years from now at 7:30 p.m. on a Wednesday?

- C. Daniel was ready to make the sacrifice necessary to obey the Lord!
  - 1. He requested the overseer give him, and his three friends, "*vegetables to eat and water to drink*" (1:11-13)
  - 2. The overseer consented to try this for 10 days. At the end of 10 days, Daniel and his three friends looked better than the other youths (1:14-16)
- D. The Lord blessed Daniel and his friends because they put Him first in their lives (1:17-21; Matt 6:33)
- E. We can find the way of escape from every temptation if we are determined to find it! (I Cor. 10:13)

## II. YOU MUST PURPOSE IN YOUR HEART TO "*CLEAVE UNTO THE LORD*" (Acts 11:22-24 ASV & KJV)

- A. The word "*cleave*" means, "1 To stick fast; adhere. 2. To be faithful" (*Funk & Wagnall's, p. 246*)
- B. *W. E. Vine* defines the Greek word, which is translated "*cleave*", as "to join fast together, to glue, cement..." (*p. 196*)
- C. The husband and wife are to cleave to each other like super-glue (Matt 19:5; Gen. 2:24 ASV)
- D. We must "*cleave to that which is good*" (Rom. 12:9 ASV)
- E. You need to resolve, or purpose, in your heart now that you will not allow anything, or anybody, to interfere with your worship and service to God; i. e., sporting events – attending or participating; extra-curricular activities at school – band, ball, chorus, jobs, etc. (Example: Tracy Partain in Zephyrhills would leave Little Caesar's Pizza when it was 7:25 p.m. on Wednesday night, even if the manager gave her a hard time!)
- F. Like young Daniel, you need to go to your supervisors, or teachers, to make clear that you will not be missing worship services. Usually, those who oversee will respect your conscience and work in accordance with it as was done for Daniel. (Example: As a teenager, before I began to work for Publix, I told the manager that I didn't want to work on Wednesday evening. He agreed to that condition and kept his word. Publix was closed on Sundays at that time.)

## III. YOU NEED TO RESOLVE "*WITH PURPOSE OF HEART*" TO "*CLEAVE UNTO THE LORD*" WHEN:

- A. You leave for college
  - 1. Many young people quit worshipping God when they go away to college
  - 2. How wonderful, when we hear that a young person is active in the local church where he, or she, now lives (III Jn. 4; Acts 16:1,2)
- B. You move from one city to another by your job
- C. You retire and move to Florida or some other place

## IV. YOU NEED TO PURPOSE TO "*KEEP THYSELF PURE*" (I Tim. 5:22)

- A. Before they go on their first date, young ladies and young men should purpose just what is, and what isn't, acceptable conduct (I Cor. 13:5)
  - 1. Waiting until you are in the passion of petting is too late to decide about proper conduct
  - 2. You should have already resolved:
    - a. Not to allow to a young man to be free with his hands
    - b. To dress modestly
    - c. What type movies you will watch

- d. When is a reasonable time to be home
  - e. Not to go to parties where there is drinking, dancing, or drugs
  - f. What conversation is decent and what is not decent
- B. Joseph was a young man away from home who refused to be seduced by a wicked woman (Gen. 39:9)
- C. All of us need to purpose to keep ourselves pure by reading, seeing, and meditating on things pure (Phil. 4:8; Prov. 4:23)
- D. We must purpose in our hearts that we will not defile ourselves with "*evil thoughts*" or words (Matt. 15:18-20; Psa. 17:3)

**CONCLUSION:** Will you purpose in your heart to become a Christian? Will you fulfill that purpose by confessing your faith in Christ, being buried with Him in baptism for the remission of your sins, and being raised to live as a faithful disciple of His?

~ Don Hastings ~