

# Daniel's Purpose

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[0:00] Daniel chapter 1 from verse 3 it says, And the king spake unto Afshpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain! of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes. Children, in whom was no blemish, but well-favoured and skilful in all wisdom and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might tinge the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

Verse 5, And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank, so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king. Now among these were of the children of Judah Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names. For he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar, and to Hananiah of Shadrach, and to Mishael of Meshach, and to Azariah of Abednego. But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank. Therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

Young men with a purpose. Young men with a purpose. Daniel was an inspiration to us all. Daniel, a young man, a teenager at this time, a man yet, a man of faith, a man of conviction, a man of courage. And he remained true to his convictions despite many trials that faced him, many tests. His faith sustained him through all of that. These were difficult days for Israel. Israel was going through a time of captivity, a time of defeat. The temple was stripped of its precious things. And here was Daniel and his others selected for special training in Nebuchadnezzar's service. These were young men with great potential. It says of them that they were well-favored. There was no blemish.

They were gifted with wisdom and with intelligence. And here these young men were chosen, specially selected. What a great privilege and opportunity that it was. Chosen to serve in the king's palace. To be taught the language and literature of the Babylonians. And to be given special provisions from the king's very table of his food and drink. It meant three years of special training for the king's service. And Daniel and these young men were just teenagers at this time. Perhaps just 15. Or certainly teenagers. And Daniel was a member of the royal family where he came from. Yet now he was a prisoner of war.

[3:12] He was chained, bound by the country that was his enemy, Babylon. How would these young men face this onslaught of temptation that was to come against them? How would they face this challenge of living amongst a pagan people? Daniel was a child of God living in a foreign culture. And so too are we. So too are we.

Are we here today. Australia is a foreign culture for us. Even much more. It doesn't matter what country we've come from. Whether we're from USA or in my case from England. But Australia is a foreign culture.

It's a foreign culture for us Aussies that are saved today. We're living in a foreign culture. A foreign culture. And so too we as God's people are meant to be strangers in the world. We have no continuing city. As we read in 1 Peter 1. We're living in a hostile place. Yet it is possible to live in such a way that we bring praise and honour unto our God. We can be as these young men were. Living with conviction in an age of compromise. Notice here that we see some strategies that Nebuchadnezzar used against these young men. These young men who followed God. Nebuchadnezzar used various strategies against them. And we could compare that with how our current enemy uses various strategies against us to break down our resolve.

Number 1. We see isolation. Isolation. Daniel was captured and deported from his homeland. He was taken from his home in Jerusalem to live in this foreign city of Babylon. The king isolated



He changed the names of these Hebrew young people. It was a deliberate propaganda campaign. A person's name symbolises their identity.

I know in some places I've heard, for example, I know some of our Indian brothers were telling me, for example, Sophia and Joshua, they've got the name of Jesus in their surname.

They've adopted that as a Christian acknowledgement. Our names mean something. And we see in this passage here how the enemy, Nebuchadnezzar, wanted to erase those godly things that were even part of these people's names.

Our names symbolise our identity. And the king wanted to change these young people's loyalty from Judah's God to the Babylonians' God. He wanted to get rid of everything that reminded them of their origin and of their destiny.

[11:10] Four of the men who were selected are named here in Daniel chapter 1. Four of these young men are named and then renamed, renamed to honour Babylonian gods.

The names that their parents had adopted that were Hebrew words for the God of Israel. But their new names reflected Babylonian deities. For example, Daniel.

Daniel, God is my judge. They wanted to erase that and replace it with Bel to Shazar. The top god in Babylon was called Bel.

And so Daniel's new name was to mean Bel's prince. Then we see Hananiah. Hananiah, it means Yahweh has been gracious. He was given the name Shadrach, which means inspired by the god Shad.

Thirdly, we see Mishael. Mishael, who is like God, was renamed Meshach, which means who is like the god Shad. And then Azariah, who Jehovah helps, was called Abednego, which means servant of the shining god of fire.

[12:20] It was a deliberate, intentional effort by the enemy to reprogram these young people, to rewire them to be Babylonians. And their new names reflected a new loyalty that the enemy wanted them to adopt.

And as the days went by, the king would have hoped that these young men would be tempted to begin thinking like Babylonians. It was an identification.

What a strategy he used. And friends, we're seeing this same strategy employed today in Australia. We're seeing this same strategy employed worldwide where our young people are sitting under the influence of this secular world.

And sometimes it's not so subtle, this influence. There's a concentrated cultural campaign, a cultural conflict, a battle raving for the minds and hearts of our young people in the world today. Because no teacher is truly neutral. No textbook or curriculum. Children sitting under godless teachers are being trained in the reasoning of the world.

[13:30] In a world view that is filled with relativism and secularism. I know it's a personal choice where parents send their children, but we need to be certainly very aware and very cautious, very concerned about what our children are receiving in the school room.

As Christian parents we want to see our children gain the ability to think about life and life's issues from God's perspective. This is fundamental. It's a fundamental thing and it's a strategy that the enemy of our souls is using today.

When we see that process, those strategies that we talked about of isolation, the enemy wants to isolate you from the things of God, from the word of God, from the hearing of God's word, from the fellowship with God's people.

The enemy of our soul wants to indoctrinate, to fill your minds with the worldly ways of thinking, indoctrination. Thirdly, identification. He wants you to identify with the world and with the heroes of this world, with the pop stars of this world, with the film stars of this world, such that they become your heroes instead of godly parents.

And fourthly, immorality is another strategy. Immorality is another strategy that Nebuchadnezzar used. Nebuchadnezzar gave these teenagers some daily food and wine from his own table.

[14:56] He extended it to them. This would have been, I'd imagine, the finest of gourmet foods. This would have been the finest drink that you could obtain. Now, we don't know exactly what it was about this food that meant compromise for Daniel.

We could surmise about what it was about this food. Perhaps it was that this food was associated with idol worship and such it would have been a question of conscience there. It could have been that the food was declared by God to be unclean for the children of Israel. Or thirdly, it could be that this food was subtly such to seduce Daniel into the lifestyle of the Babylonians, into those comforts and pleasures, into the lifestyle that the Babylonians enjoyed. The good times, the comforts, the position that Daniel and his friends occupied, gearing it all to trap them. Who knows, it could have been one or more or a combination of such of these things. Whatever the case, for Daniel and the young man, it was compromised. It was compromised to eat of the royal food and drink. It was compromised for Daniel to partake of the king's table and it meant a bend in turn the ways of the sinful culture.

[16:17] This is what the enemy of our soul wants for us too. So what did Daniel do? Daniel 1 verse 8, Daniel made a decision.

Daniel made a decision. He purposed in his heart. He made up his mind. He resolved that he would not defile himself. He decided that he would not compromise.

Verse 8 of chapter 1, But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat nor with the wine which he drank. Therefore he requested of the prince of eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

For Daniel and his friends, they were taking a big risk here. This was a very risky thing to refuse something from the king. He made a commitment and his commitment was not to defile himself with the king's food.

What of us today? What of we here today? God's people here now in this place, in this time. What of us? What of you today? Will we stand firm?

[17:22] Will we stand firm? Will we determine not to compromise our faith? Not to defile ourselves? Will we make that serious commitment to follow Christ?

Whatever the cost. Many in the church today are defiling themselves in walking so closely to the world that there's scarcely a difference.

It's like they're walking around or driving around a curling road, a curving, winding road and they just get as close to the edge as they possibly can, thinking that they can still be safe.

And friends, we know the dangers, we heard a living example of the dangers of compromising with the flesh with the world and the things of this world. But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself.

Friends, as God's people, we ought to not follow the world and its habits and fashions, its conversation. It's so easy to follow suit with the world.

[18:29] This could be what Daniel faced at this time of perhaps lounging around and enjoying the best of food and fare that he could partake of.

He could have just followed suit. It would have been an easy thing to just go along with the crowd. Everyone else was enjoying the party. But Daniel didn't want to be playing around with fire.

He didn't want to play around with carnal ways and worldliness. He wanted his thought life to be guarded. And friends, we too, we can learn from Daniel and these godly young men how to live godly in an ungodly environment.

Daniel honoured God. He was prepared to risk his life for not conforming. And here he was in this tender age, in this unfriendly environment, facing certain death.

Daniel, surrounded here by temptations of every kind, and he had few with him and many against him. Yet Daniel was blameless and consistent, so much so that his enemies could find no fault in him, other than his commitment to his God.

[19:36] And no one could convince Daniel that he was too young to start taking his faith seriously. There's some young people here tonight. Some young people here tonight, there's many men and women of God in the pages of Scripture that you can take heart in tonight.

Men like young Isaac, young Joseph, young Joshua, young Samuel, young David, young Solomon, young Obadiah, young Josiah, and young Timothy.

Now some have said of them, these were not angels but men, with hearts naturally like your own. They too had obstacles to contend with, lusts to mortify, trials to endure, hard places to fill, just like you.

But young as they were, they all found it possible to serve God. Daniel resolved himself, he determined, he decided, he made that decision that he would not defile himself at that tender age. There's an old time preacher called Jonathan Edwards, a man known to be a man of God, of old time. And Jonathan Edwards wrote some decisions that he made as a young man.

[20:50] He was only some 19, 20 years old but he made some resolutions, some resolutions that he wrote down. These are just a selection of them, there's quite a number of them. Think of some of these, maybe this is a resolution.

You don't have to wait until January the 1st to make these resolutions, people tonight. Here's some good resolutions you can make. He says, resolved, resolved, never, henceforward, until I die to act, not only to speak as, if I were in any way my own but entirely and altogether God's.

Resolved, to act as if I were in any way my own but entirely and altogether God's. That's a good resolution, isn't it?

I have been crucified with Christ, I belong to him. Resolved to strive to my utmost every week, to be brought higher in religion or in faith in other words and to a higher exercise of grace than I was the week before.

He had a week by week determination to grow in his faith, to be a growing Christian, to be making progress. He goes on, resolved, resolved to study the scriptures so steadily, constantly and frequently as that I may find and plainly perceive myself to grow in the knowledge of the same.

[22:10] It's been said that, you know, if we have little scripture, we have little growth. If we have much scripture, we have much growth. We need to feed our minds with the word of God, put it in our hearts, meditate upon it, memorise the word, study it.

I know you can get tapes and mp3 players to listen to the word. Feed your spirit with the word of God. God. We've got an eternal destiny.

These things matter. Resolved never to give over or in the least to slacken my fight with my corruptions, however unsuccessful I may be.

He determined to fight, to fight the good fight, to fight that fight that is within, the fighting of the spirit and the flesh. It's as if you could hear as someone described it here, where the devil may win round one and win round two and the world may win round three and I win round four and even if my corruptions win rounds five to fourteen by the grace of God, I'm coming out for round fifteen still believing I've got a knockout punch left in me.

Now keep on fighting. Jonathan Edwards was resolved to fight and another one is resolved to endeavor to obtain for myself as much happiness in the other world as I possibly can with all the power, might, vigour and vehemence, yea, violence I'm capable of or can bring myself to exert in any way that can be thought of.

[23:50] I'm going to lay up treasure in heaven, I'm not going to let a day go by where I do not make an eternal investment. Surely Lord you are giving me an opportunity today to put something in my heavenly bank account.

He was a man of relentless open allegiance to God. He resolved not to defile himself at a tender age just like Daniel did. Think of some resolutions that you can write, you can look up the resolutions of Jonathan Edwards, it's something that you can search for and find and quite telling, quite inspiring, things that we can all perhaps take some ourselves and adopt for ourselves. Daniel was a man confident in his God. He was confident in God's way as the right way to live. And in verse 15 we see how God blessed his faithfulness.

God blessed Daniel's commitment to not defile himself. He blessed his obedience and he blessed such that it showed in their very faces that this diet that they chose, this commitment that they undertook showed in the very physical sense of how they looked, that God had blessed them. And in verse 17 we see that God blessed these young men, these faithful young men with knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

[25:11] God blessed their faithfulness. And in verses 19 through 21 we see when they come before the king after this time of training, after this time of testing, of temptations overcome.

It says that the king communed with them in verse 19 and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. Therefore stood day before the king. And verse 20 and in all matters of wisdom and understanding that the king inquired of them he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm. And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus. Daniel and his young men were found to be blessed not only in their physical appearance but then later found to have such wisdom and understanding that was ten times better than the king's closest leaders. What a testimony that was to the grace of God at work in these young men. They became the very best of the young men of their day. And I challenge young men, young women here tonight that you can be the best you can with God's grace and strength.

[26:32] You can be determined no matter what the strategies that the enemy throws across your path. No matter how he might try to isolate you from the word of God, from fellowship.

No matter how he might try to indoctrinate you as you're embarrassed day after day, moment by moment with media, with questionable things that are constantly around us, you can decide, you can determine in your heart like Daniel did to not defile yourself with the things of the world.

So we see the wisdom of these men. Where did this wisdom come from? It came from the fear of the Lord. That is the beginning of wisdom. That's where it starts.

It's the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord. And God gave this wisdom, it was not from the schooling of the Babylonians, but it came from the Lord.

As we read in Proverbs 2, verse 6, it says, For the Lord giveth wisdom, out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. God grants wisdom from the scriptures, from the fear of him.

[27:41] And just wrapping up now, Daniel remained true in his commitment. In verse 21 of Daniel 1, it says, Daniel continued. Daniel continued.

There was a faithfulness. Daniel continued. He continued in the court of Babylon nearly 70 years. 70 years. David continued to be faithful.

And he purposed to obey God. And God granted him favour, granted him joy and health. He became a ruler and a chief administrator. In Daniel 2, verse 48, four kings trusted Daniel through his life.

Why? Because Daniel was a man of principle. He was a man of principle. He was an example to us of holiness, even in this heathen place, in this heathen palace.

He lived a godly, separated life to the glory of God. We too can dare to have a purpose-firm. We could dare to be a Daniel. We could dare to be as Daniel.

[28:44] Stare fast in our purpose. Stare fast in our serving of the Lord. Looking unto him and finding his grace every day. Purposing in our heart not to defile ourselves.

We don't want the dirt and muck and mire to stick of this world to us. We want to seek God's face and God's way. Daniel was faithful. A man of strong faith, a man of prayer.

As much we could say much more about Daniel as a man of prayer. He knelt in prayer as a demonstration of his humility. He prayed three times daily. A demonstration of his continual dependence upon God.

He gave thanks even in the midst of persecution. A demonstration of his gratitude. And prayer was customary for him. It reflects his persistence and his faithfulness.

So friends, despite his rise to power, despite the preeminence that he had in the nation, Daniel did not compromise. Daniel purposed in his heart not to defile himself.

[29:53] What of you? What of we here tonight? Will we be a man, a woman of principle? Will we be men and women of purity? Will we be men and women of prayer?

Let us pray. Dear Lord, we praise you. We thank you, Father, for this time. Thank you for Daniel. There's an example of his life of the Hebrew children, the other teenagers who showed their resolve.

They demonstrated their faith. It was lived out. It was evident for all to see and they stood firm as we see later how they did not bow down to the popular God of the day, so-called.

And Lord, we know that you are the one who deserves our very best, our very heart's devotion. We pray if there's any young people here tonight, older people here tonight, that they want to renew

