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Daniel 1:8-21

Daniel Purposed In His Heart

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We're going to be in the book of Daniel. We're going to be in chapter 1. So if you want to go ahead and get your Bibles ready there, Daniel 1.

We're going to be looking at really a great example that we have through Daniel and really his three friends and really kind of get to discover together what the secret of Daniel's life was. I know that Pastor Jack has mentioned often there seem to be two characters in the Bible of which there is nothing negative written; Joseph is one of them, and Daniel is another. And so you kind of look at that, and you get a little irritated, I guess, and why are they so perfect or righteous or whatever? But I think what we'll look at tonight will give us a bit of a key to that and also some encouragement as far as being able to follow that example.

To give you a little bit of background, Daniel and his three friends – along with a lot of other young men – had been taken from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar to go back to Babylon. And this occurred sometime before the actual invasion of Israel and Judah and specifically of the city of Jerusalem. So, more than likely, Daniel and his three friends.....they become this great example of how to stand strong in a pagan and secular environment. Now I know that we don't live in an environment like that. (Laughing) Right? So there might be some good things here for us to key in to.

Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians – they first kind of breeze through Jerusalem, the Jerusalem area, in 605 B.C., and they took various sprigs of the Judean nobility. So it's very likely that Daniel and his friends were possibly of royal descent, certainly within the nobility. So these weren't just kids off the street; these were kids that were, in a sense, privileged, and Nebuchadnezzar knew what he was doing when he grabbed these and brought them back to Babylon.

So let's go ahead and start reading at verses 5-7 just to give us a little bit of an introduction. We're going to focus on verses 8 to the end of the chapter. But just to give us kind of a running start – because now at this point they are in Babylon. And here's what happens in verse 5 of chapter 1, "And the king appointed for them a daily provision of the king's delicacies and of the wine which he drank, and three years of training for them, so that at the end of that time they might serve before the king. Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. To them the chief of the eunuchs gave names: he gave Daniel the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abed-Nego." So we probably know them a little better from their Babylonian names; maybe not Daniel so much. But certainly, when you hear about Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego, you remember that whole fiery-furnace incident. But here are their Hebrew names, and it's kind of interesting that it's possible that for these four – and by the way just keep in mind

more than likely they were still teenagers when they were dragged from their homes in Jerusalem, shackled to probably the back of a camel and had to walk some 600-800 miles from there to Jerusalem – but the names that they were given by their parents have the name of God in them, every one of them. Daniel means “God is my judge.” Hananiah is “Jehovah is gracious.” Mishael is “Who is like God.” And Azariah, “The LORD is my helper.” So one thing we’re going to notice is that these guys would never forget who they were in terms of their names and whose high and holy name they really bore, and that was the God of Israel.

So we’re introduced here. We see that the king has an idea for these guys. He’s going to feed them with all of the great delicacies that he partakes in himself, including the wine, and he’s going to train them for three years. And then, at the end of that period of time - as we’ll see in the verses that we’re going to look at in a little bit - he’s going to test them to see if really they can be part of his nobility, his cabinet and even, in some cases, his advisors.

So that then brings us to verse 8 where we really see the key to all of Daniel’s character, and it really lays the groundwork for the rest of his life. And it’s found in one simple little phrase. In verse 8, it says “But Daniel” – what does it say here? - purposed in his heart.....” Notice that? “But Daniel purposed in his heart.” So they get all of this information here about what they’re going to be doing. Again, you have to keep in mind they are ripped from their homes; 14-, 15-year-olds probably living a really good life in Jerusalem even though things had gotten very pagan and idolatrous back home. And that’s one thing that we notice about Daniel right off because it says, “Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.” You kind of see Daniel’s heart right from the beginning, here. He purposed in his heart that he wasn’t going to compromise. He purposed deep within his own convictions that this whole idea of the “king’s delicacies,” they knew what that meant, because the king didn’t eat anything until it was taken by the idols of Babylon first. So this was food that was offered to idols and then came to the king’s table. And Daniel is saying, in a sense to himself and for the sake of his other three friends, “Yeah, we can’t do this. We rather would not.”

But, by the way, this whole thing of “but Daniel purposed in his heart,” this wasn’t a spur-of-the-moment decision. We need to understand that. Long before, back in Jerusalem, Daniel had resisted that pagan pull of idolatry that was all around him in even his own town; that idolatrous kind of lure that was there amongst his elders and his peers. So Daniel purposing in his heart wasn’t just because the situation came at him; he had done that a long time ago. And for whatever reason on that long walk to Babylon, he had determined that he would not ever compromise his beliefs, no matter what came his way. He had heard about the Babylonians, I’m sure. He knew what kind of people they were. He had heard about Nebuchadnezzar, what an evil and barbaric man he was even though quite sophisticated and really advanced in sciences and “religions.” So those things had to be going through this young man’s mind. But look at his integrity and his character.

So when this challenge comes up, Daniel's heart is already in the right place. I hope you can see a lesson in that because we're all faced at different times in our lives with challenges. Right? Some of it is circumstantial; there's trials that come our way, sometimes we get challenged in our faith. We may have a co-worker that suddenly gets in our face about "you and this Jesus, can you guys ever get it together?" And especially don't you love to hear from them, "Well, if God is so good, why is all this evil happening everywhere?" They'll challenge you with those kinds of things. That's not the time to get your heart ready, is it? The time to get your heart ready is kind of now; should have been happening all along in your walk, that we too can say that we purposed in our hearts that we won't compromise our beliefs. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it springs the issues of life." I heard it put this way: a heart that loves the Lord trusts the Lord. Does that make sense? A heart that loves the Lord trusts the Lord. Do you see how those two things go hand-in-hand? You can't say "I love somebody" and not trust them; you can't say "I trust somebody" and not love them. They have to be united. And that's where Daniel was. He had this deep love for God, so deep that he wasn't going to compromise. And, because of it, he was willing to trust the LORD...to the point where he challenges, if you will, the leadership. He makes this request of the chief eunuch that he might not defile himself. And by the words that are spoken here, the verbiage that's right here in the text in front of us, you get the impression that Daniel wasn't kind of mealy-mouthing around, he wasn't beating around the bush here. He was saying directly, "Yeah, those foods will defile me and the God that I serve. I would rather not partake of that."

You know, even though Daniel was not able to read what Paul wrote in Romans 12:2 – because that isn't for a long time from here (but he was practicing this principle already) – where Paul says, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Someone who conforms. What is that? That's someone who's controlled by pressures from without. Right? Pressures are coming at you, so you're going to conform. All of the world is telling us how we should act, what we should do, how we should behave. And if we buckle under that, then we'll conform to it, we'll be molded into and shaped into the world's version of how someone should be. So we're not to be conformers. But we're to be transformers, and transformers are those whose lives are controlled by a power from within. That transformation, as we know, can only come when we're indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God, when Christ dwells in us.

So it's been well said this faith is not as much believing in spite of evidence. We hear that, right? Faith is not as much believing in spite of evidence, but more so, it's obeying in spite of consequence. Does that make sense? Because we can say, "Yes, I have faith in spite of the evidence," but if we don't act on it, if we're not showing anybody that I have that faith, that I'm willing to obey regardless of what the consequences might be, then what kind of faith is it, really? Because, again, that is the faith that Daniel is displaying for us here. And I like that.

And isn't it interesting that the temptation that comes to these young teenagers right away is about food. I don't know if you have any teenagers around you. I'm telling you, they'll eat you out of house and home. It's amazing! You know....my kids....they still do it in their early 20's. But I can remember when they were teens, walk in the door, and unfortunately, from our garage you can walk into the house – utility room – and you're in the kitchen. Right there to the right is the refrigerator. And they wouldn't make it into the house any further than that. So they come in the door, plop down your stuff, open that fridge. Not even if they're actually going to get something out of it. Just to make sure. It's like they're hunting at that point. (Laughing) Right? Make sure that if they get peckish in a moment, they'll know what's in there. And goodness, you can have it stocked as high as you want; it'll be empty by the end of the week.

So, here, Satan is tempting Daniel and his friends with food. And that's kind of a commonality, isn't it? The enemy doesn't like to do things too difficult or too..... he doesn't create a lot of new stuff. If it works, don't fix it, I guess. Because what did he tempt Eve with? (Genesis 3) Food. Right? "Look at the fruit. Isn't that great? Isn't that pleasant to the eye?" What did Satan tempt Jesus with? (Luke 4) "Turn these stones into bread." Here, Daniel and his friends are getting that same hammer from the enemy.

I also want you to know, before we leave verse 8 (don't worry, we'll get out of it), that Daniel did not demand this, but he requested it. There was nothing offensive about his demeanor. He just simply said.... "therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." Well, where does that lead them?

Verse 9, "Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs. And the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, 'I fear my lord the king, who has appointed your food and drink. For why should he see your faces looking worse than the young men who are your age? Then you would endanger my head before the king.' "

Notice verse 9, right away. First we have Daniel purposing in his heart – all the way back when he's first in Jerusalem, now carries him all the way to Babylon, and in this first challenge, if you will, for him to compromise, he doesn't bend, he doesn't bow - and then we see the result right away, In verse 9, "Now God had brought Daniel into favor and goodwill with the chief of the eunuchs." Isn't that beautiful?! That's God literally working on both ends. I always see it as God's power and sovereignty where it meets man's devotion and obedience. There's not a greater bond or union of the two. There's not a greater marriage, if you will, of those two things. God's sovereignty and His power coming together with man's devotion and obedience. Proverbs 16:7, "When a man's ways please the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." Isn't that wonderful? So God always works at both ends. Right? Daniel was making these commitments to the LORD, even way back in Jerusalem, and while he's doing that, God is all the way over there in Babylon (how does He do that?!) preparing the heart of this pagan eunuch so that when the two come together – and Daniel makes this request – he's already found favor in this guy's eyes. You know, it could be that he would look at it impersonally. But, no. The very fact that, in verse 10, this chief eunuch has such a dilemma on his hands shows you how much he cares for Daniel and his three friends.

Already (this we'll learn later) his name is Ashpenaz (Daniel 1:3), and he'd come to respect and admire what was it about them – it was their unwavering focus and commitment that they had to this God of Israel; that the Babylonians had never heard about before, but they're hearing about Him now! And these boys were really sticking to it. And the fact that he liked them so much made this request all the more difficult to deal with. Right? Because if he had looked at it impersonally, if he didn't care, he could have basically said to Daniel, "You're either going to eat what I give you or starve. That's your choices." Instead we see him just grappling with this and wondering, "How on earth am I going to deal with the king? I mean, if you don't eat what he puts before you, and you start looking gaunt and start losing weight, how is that going to look? That's going to affect everything." He was terrified, and he was terrified because before him stood four brave Hebrew young men, but behind him stood a ruthless, overbearing king. What the eunuch didn't know is that behind those four brave Hebrew young men stood an invisible God who was putting all things together, all those things together for good for those that love Him and are the called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). God was working all of those things out.

And the text would indicate that the chief eunuch then kind of left in a quandary because this very next verse lets us know that the steward then takes over the situation. Verse 11, "So Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, 'Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then let our appearance be examined before you, and the appearance of the young men who eat the portion of the king's delicacies; and as you see fit, so deal with your servants.' " What a lot of wisdom for a teenager! Again, you look at Daniel, and you're just.... you're baffled. But isn't this smart? He's basically saying, "Well, then give it an opportunity to be tested. Give us an opportunity to prove to you...." And notice that Daniel not only purposed in his heart not to compromise, but in these verses we've just read, we see that he purposed in his heart to be gracious towards those in authority. He's not demanding. Right? We don't see the four Jewish students here folding their arms, stomping their feet, saying, "We won't, we won't, we won't!" We don't see them forming a protest or trying to burn down the building, threatening anybody. They're just making a request, "Let us eat only vegetables. Let us stay in a vegetarian diet." By the way, I've always had a query: if two vegetarians are arguing, is it still called a beef? (Laughing) You're going to share that with somebody, aren't you? I just always wondered. Has nothing to do with the study, but....So these four Jewish students, again, they didn't make a scene. As a matter of fact, once again they're practicing a principle that Paul will lay out in Romans 12. In verse 18, he says, "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men." So Daniel, in a lot of wisdom, simply presents a test for them to be able to be obedient to their God and His laws for just ten days. If you recall, back in verse 5, we read that this training was going to go on for three years. For three years, they'd be eating the king's delicacies. For three years, they would be being trained in all of the ways of Babylon. So, in a sense, what's ten days?! That's a drop in the bucket, and that, "Certainly you can hold the king off for that long. Give it a chance. See what will happen. See if, by the end of those ten days, we don't look as good or better than the

rest.” And I love what he says, that, “If it doesn’t work, then do as you see fit. Then you can deal with us as you want.”

Now I would ask you and me, when was the last time any of us was willing to be absolutely obedient to God for ten days? I know. That’s a hard one to answer, right? It’s not that long a time. It’s a little over a week if I did the math right. Being absolutely obedient to God for ten days and then being willing to wait on God for the results. Because they just kind of threw it out there. They don’t know yet if it’s agreed upon. But, really, if you think about it, they’re putting it in God’s hands. How is all this going to turn out? How will things look at the end of those ten days? Talk about a level of trust. Right? This is amazing. It’s really exemplary if you think about it. Because here’re the two options: if God comes through and they look healthy at the end of the test, then they can go on with their kosher lives, just like that. But if He doesn’t answer, then they at least know within their heart of hearts that they did everything they could to obey and then they could move forward from there. So a lot of wisdom! As Daniel places this test before the steward, “Let us just eat vegetables and drink water for the next ten days, and then you, you examine us. We’ll leave it completely up to you. And if, at the end of ten days, you don’t like what you see, then we’ll eat those delicacies,” I guess. But Daniel had great confidence in his God and great confidence that He would come through. So, with commitment and obedience in place, now God takes over and brings things into completion. Again, I just love the picture here.

Verse 14, “So he consented with them in this matter, and tested them ten days.” So God again puts it on the heart of this steward, now, to go ahead and let them do it. Verse 15, “And at the end of ten days their features appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king’s delicacies. Thus the steward took away their portion of delicacies and the wine that they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.” So it worked. They trusted in the LORD. And once again, we see this beautiful marriage of man’s obedience and God’s sovereignty. Right? Daniel purposes in his heart not to be defiled. He presents this to the steward – this test. And in that place of commitment and devotion to God, not only having God put favor in their hearts but He also brings a favorable outcome. First, that they had permission to do it. “All right. Ten days. We’ll go with it. You guys want to put your lives on the line, that’s fine. As long as mine’s not on the line,” the steward is saying, “you guys go ahead and do what you need to do. So, we’ll give you vegetables, and we’ll give you water to drink.” And as we read, at the end of that period of time, God had answered the prayer. This is such a vivid illustration of the promise and principles that are laid down in Matthew 6:33 where Jesus (in the Sermon on the Mount) said simply, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be....” (congregation says, “added to you.”) All right. Just checking to see that you’re with me still. Yes. “All of these things will be added to you.” That’s exactly what Daniel was doing.

A couple other verses that amplify this. Colossians 4:5, “Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.” These guys were certainly doing that. 1 Peter 3:15, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.”

So not only were they doing this, but they kept themselves humble. I like this quote from Warren Wiersbe. He says this, "When it comes to solving the problems of life, we must ask God for the courage to face the problem humbly and honestly, the wisdom to understand it, the strength to do what He tells us to do, and the faith to trust Him to do the rest." That's it. That's exactly what Daniel and his three friends did. They put it in the LORD's hands. They did much like Moses' mom (Exodus 2) who took that little screaming two-year-old baby, stuck him in a basket, and just floated him down the river. She put that little one in God's hands, and the LORD took it from there. Here, Daniel is doing the same thing. "We'll take this time, we'll eat these vegetables and have this moment where the LORD can minister. Ten days' worth." And as it says, at the very end, they appeared better. I like that little phrase, "fatter in flesh." Their cheeks were puffy. Just from their vegetarian diet. And so the steward said, "Well, you've proven it to me. I don't have to worry about the king." And so from that point on, they were able to eat the diet that they were accustomed to and stayed away from all of those things that were offered to idols.

Then, verse 17, God goes above and beyond to reward these faithful servants of His. Look what it says, "As for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams." Are you gettin' a pattern here? Man's obedience, God's sovereignty; man's devotion, God's enabling and power coming together in that perfect marriage. Making that bond that's inseparable but also the world can't stand against it. The world has nothing to say against it. And even so, as these young men go into their studies, God's now amplifying their abilities, giving them knowledge and skills in literature and wisdom; and even for Daniel, visions and dreams. Now they had to study, they had to apply themselves, but then God gave them the skills to do those things, to learn the material, to discern to it, and to understand, and wisdom to know how to apply those things.

That's the conversation I've had with my kids over and over. As Christians, we always want to pray, and when they would have tests and mid-terms and finals coming up, I would tell them, "Well make sure that you pray as you're sitting there, getting ready to take that test. Make sure you ask the Lord to help you. But I'll tell you this: He's not going to stick anything in your brain that you haven't put there yourself. You still have to study. You still have to get it in your mind. And once it's there, God can then bring it to the surface and have you answer all the things correctly." And that's exactly what Daniel and his friends had to do. They still had to study. But they were applying what God had put before them.

James 2:26, "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." They had made this commitment to God, they had purposed in their heart; they now had fulfilled that. They were keeping themselves undefiled, and the LORD rewards them. He says, "I'm going to give you what you need above and beyond" to the point, as we'll see much later in the book of Daniel (don't worry, we won't study it tonight) that he is able to discern visions and dreams. He'll interpret dreams for the very king himself, this Nebuchadnezzar, this evil man that ripped them from their homes. What an amazing kind of full circle for Daniel, God taking it even a step further.

And the interesting thing is, what do you suppose they studied? Well, they were learning the Babylonian religion. They were studying the system of astrology which basically is the basis of their religion and their science. So, really, bottom line is it was a secular education. They did not get dragged to Babylon to go to private school. They were in the public school of Babylon learning this secular education steeped in superstition, by the way. But God had a purpose in that, in that by them understanding the mindset of the Babylonian people, Daniel and his three friends were then better able to show them the superiority of God's wisdom. Isn't that what we see through the book of Daniel? Time and time again, he's coming in with God's wisdom. Not man's. Not man's.....all of his learning and all of his speculations, all of those things that he thinks he has knowledge in. No. Just the simple wisdom of God.

Let's talk for just a moment about that. What does it mean when we ask God for wisdom? You ever thought about that? "Oh, Lord, give me wisdom in this situation." You know, we might just throw that out there thinking that God's going to somehow stick something in our brain, I don't know, that we'll be able to do it better. And that's certainly our hope. But the way I've always looked at it – just because I kind of have a simple brain anyway – is when I ask God for wisdom, I'm really asking Him to help me see this situation the way He does. "Help me to look at this person or this situation that I'm in through Your eyes, God." Because we know God is wise, and if we see it the way He does, we'll be exercising that wisdom as well. And how do we attain God's wisdom? How do we know how He sees things? It's right here, folks. It's in His Word. That's why it's so important to be in His Word, to know it from cover to cover, to have that full counsel within our hearts so that when things come our way, we can say, "No, that's not of the Lord," or, "Yes, God's confirming that in my heart." That's when we ask for wisdom, and that's what Daniel and his friends were able to show these pagan idolaters, these ones that studied the stars. Right?

So then, in verse 18, as we continue on, it says, "Now at the end of the days, when the king had said that they should be brought in," (so this is the end of the three years) "the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. Then the king interviewed them, and among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they served before the king." Wow, isn't that a surprise!

Verse 20, "And in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better" - catch this – "than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm." So these guys surpassed even the ones that supposedly had it all together already, had been doing this for years; they had the experience, they had the knowledge, these magicians and these astrologers. And yet here come these four Hebrew young men, and what is it about them? So he gives, Nebuchadnezzar gives, the final exam. Right? He wanted to make sure that he had the best. And the three years of training now being up, the real test about to begin, and look at what God can do with an obedient vessel. He so impresses the king that he's enamored. He can't even put it to words. That word, as it says, is he "interviewed"

them, basically means he simply had conversation with them; he just talked back and forth, he conversed with them.

But here's the beauty of it. When we're obedient.....because when man is promoted, God is glorified. And that's what's happening here. Nebuchadnezzar is starting to get a small dose already of this God of the Hebrews, and that's going to play out in his life for sure. And not only were they smart, but their vegetarian diet had them looking pretty good, too. Pretty good. Certainly not like that one man who was a vegetarian and went in to the doctor and had a carrot sticking out of his nose and a stalk of celery sticking out of his ear and a leaf of lettuce sticking out of the other ear. And he asked the doctor, "Doctor, what's wrong with me?!" And the doctor says, "Well, for starts you're not eating right...." (Laughing) You have to think about that one for a minute, but.....it's supposed to go here.....(Pastor Gerard points to his mouth) Yeah.

That's not how Daniel and his friends looked. They looked much better. Much better. But then, like it says in verse 20, once again, "in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better." That's just amazing. Right? He pressed in, Nebuchadnezzar. He asked them the hard questions in order to weed out the weak ones. And this word "examined" kind of gives an indication of not just to test but to compare. In other words, he would question them and then compare one to the other. He turned it into a competition. "Let's see who can do the best." And every round that all of these young men came before him, Daniel and his three friends always rose to the top. They were always that exemplary show.

And even compared to the existing magicians – by the way, who dealt in the occult, right? – and the astrologers – those who studied the movements of the stars and their influences on events – they were better than all the rest. And what was the difference? Very simple. We said it before. They had God's wisdom. That was it. They looked at things from God's perspective. You know, it's so simple sometimes, isn't it? When the world can't figure out, "Where did we actually come from? The only way we can explain this is we've got to go back so many billions of years to where nothing existed but somehow it did, somehow it all exploded, and from that, here we are." You can walk up to that person and say, "No, it's very simple. There's a God in heaven who created it all. He spoke it into existence. There was no big bang. Well, yeah, there was. The big bang was, 'And God spoke.'" Just that simple wisdom of God.

And, by the way, there's no reason why Christian students on secular campuses shouldn't be among the finest students who win some of the highest awards to the glory of God. No reason at all. Because, again, our kids have God's wisdom.

So finishing off here, in verse 21, it says, "Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus." So Daniel's promotion when it came – and it's not going to be short and sweet – it would abide with him. This first year of Cyrus, his reign, would be in 539 B.C. So if you figure that Daniel was maybe around 15 years old in 605 B.C., when he was taken from Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, then he would have been 83 years old

when the revelations were recorded in chapters 10-12 in the back of the book, which happened toward the end of his life; and he lived beyond that.

Here's the amazing result of that little phrase that we stumbled on back in verse 8, "And Daniel purposed in his heart." The result is that his reputation would walk beside him down through the years, day in and day out, week in and week out. To the point where even – and I won't go into the story in detail – that time where he's lowered into the lions' den, maybe being executed that day. God sees fit to once again take His sovereign power and marry it with man's obedience, and Daniel was spared and ministers to King Darius in a way no one else could. Daniel saw the 70-year captivity begin and end, and he stood there as a small band of pioneers set out once again for the Promised Land. Why was he able to do that? Because he had "purposed in his heart." Psalm 90:12, "So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."

So, looking at this example, here's the question we want to leave ourselves with here this evening. When is the right time to purpose in your heart? Is it when the crisis arises? Is it when the situation comes there and you're faced with it? That's not what Daniel showed us. When is the right time? I would say it's now, wouldn't you? Absolutely. Because this chapter should encourage us all that when God is not allowed to rule, He will overrule and is even able to touch the hearts of these pagan people for the sake of His own kids. And we look at the world around us, and we look at our own leadership in our nation, and there's not a lot of hope there. Not a lot. But goodness, we do have hope in God, don't we? And may we be not conformers but transformers, that power that's within. And my prayer for all of us tonight is that we would, indeed, purpose in our heart today. Amen?

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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