

## **Week 32 – A Captive Kingdom**

### **Daniel 1 – Purpose of Heart**

**Aug 10-11**

#### **Summary & Goal:**

That God is sovereign over the affairs of mankind is central to the book of Daniel. Three words describe his life: purpose, prayer, and prophecy. In chapter 1 we will see that Daniel’s “purpose of heart” was fueled by his commitment, which then fueled his courage to act in faith in the face of adversity. As believers our commitment to the Lord should lead us to purpose of heart, giving us the courage to act in faith, even in times of adversity.

**Main Passages:** Daniel 1

#### **Session Outline:**

##### **Daniel had Purpose of Heart**

- 1. Daniel’s Commitment Fueled His Purpose of Heart**
- 2. Daniel’s Purpose of Heart Fueled His Courage**

#### **Session in a Sentence:**

Victory begins with purpose of heart that is fueled by commitment, giving us the courage to stand in faith even in the face of adversity.

#### **Kingdom Connection:**

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego courageously obeyed God, even in captivity. God granted them favor and gave them wisdom and understanding.

#### **Missional Application:**

As we seek to live as believers with purpose of heart, our trust in the sovereignty of God and our courage to stand in faith will point people to our King, Jesus.

## **Introduction:**

*(Teachers- this lesson marks the beginning of the Captivity Era. A review of the Eras is below and optional. Please note that this lesson focuses only on Daniel 1. Daniel 9 will be covered in week 36, the weekend of September 7/8.)*

What if your worst-case scenario came to fruition? Would you, could you not only survive but thrive in your circumstances? This is exactly where the prophet Daniel finds himself. The worst-case scenario has happened. Just as the prophet Jeremiah had warned, Judah's immorality, injustice to the needy and poor, and idolatry had led to the nation's ruin. This is our first lesson in the Captivity Era.

From the beginning we have seen God's sovereign hand over creation. Yet, from the beginning He gave mankind freewill to make their own choices. In the Creation Era this led to the fall of man as sin entered the world. In the Patriarch, Exodus & Law Eras, God made a covenant with Israel, promising to care for and bless them, if they obeyed His commands. If they disobeyed, He promised to discipline them and scatter them among the Gentiles. (See Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 27-30). The Conquest Era was a victorious time as they fought battle after battle to take the Promised Land. The Judges Era was challenging as the nation of Israel decided to do what was "right in their own eyes," which led them into the Sin Cycle of being close to God, then falling into sin and rebellion, their disobedience leading them further and further from God. They would finally cry out to God in confession and repentance and God in His mercy and goodness would hear their cry, forgive them and bless them again. It happened almost every 40 years, again and again.

During the Judges Era, Israel as a nation, decided they wanted an earthly king "like all the other nations." God desired to be their One, True, King, but allowed them to choose. Thus, began the Kingdom Era. King Saul was the king they chose for themselves and it did not end well. Israel's second king, David, was a man after God's own heart. He was not perfect but never departed from God. He desired to serve and please God. Israel had three kings that somehow kept the kingdom united, but under the fourth king, Rehoboam, the Kingdom divided into the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. As we have seen, 19 Kings ruled in the Northern Kingdom, each acting wickedly and worshipping idols. God sent prophet after prophet to perform miracles and call His people to turn from their idols back to the living God, to no avail. God raised up the Assyrians against the Northern Kingdom and sent them into captivity away from their land.

In the Southern Kingdom, the people followed God when they had a King who followed God and loved His Word. But as the King goes so goes the Kingdom. King Ahab and his wicked wife Jezebel influenced the people to follow idols, as did Manasseh and Amon. Last week we studied King Josiah, one of the few good kings Judah had known. Josiah led the nation into revival, challenging them to put God first without compromise. But it was short-lived. As we read this week his son, Jehoahaz became king "and he did evil in the sight of the Lord," as did the next king, Jehoiakim, and so on. The prophet Jeremiah prophesied that the sins of the nation of Judah would send them into captivity for seventy years, that the temple would be

destroyed and that they would serve their enemies. (Jeremiah 25:1-14, Chronological Bible, August 4<sup>th</sup>, pp. 1005-1006). And that is exactly what happened.

Instead of being a light among the Gentiles, the Israelites had become like them, worshipping pagan gods. And now, Judah was taken captive by the Babylonians. Daniel 1:2 tells us “the Lord gave” Judah into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. As commentator Warren Wiersbe put it, “God would rather have His people living in shameful captivity in a pagan land than living like pagans in the Holy Land and disgracing His name.” (Wiersbe, *Be Resolute*, Chapter 1).

Yet, God uses this time of captivity to reveal His sovereign power in the first empire of the world. Our wise and mighty God still accomplishes His purposes in this world, even when we make personal choices outside of His preferred choices for us. History is His Story. God is sovereign in the affairs of men and always at work for our good and His glory.

Daniel, a young teen, is chosen along with his three friends as special captives, set apart for the Babylonian King’s service. Yet, Daniel ultimately rises to be prime minister of Babylon. He becomes a light in the darkness of a pagan society, a statesman of great accomplishment, a servant of the God Most High. Daniel’s prophecies later unlock the book of Revelation. Daniel was a man of great purpose, prayer, and prophecy, all anchored by his belief in the sovereignty of God. Today we will review his purpose, specifically his purpose of heart in the face of adverse circumstances.

I think there is value in reading this first chapter of Daniel’s story in its entirety, then going back to review specific verses. Read with me Daniel 1:1-20:

*Daniel 1:1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. <sup>2</sup> And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the articles of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the articles into the treasure house of his god.*

*<sup>3</sup> Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king’s descendants and some of the nobles, <sup>4</sup> young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king’s palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans. <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. <sup>7</sup> 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.*

*<sup>8</sup> But 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. <sup>9</sup> Now God had brought Daniel into the*

*favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs. <sup>10</sup> 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."*

*<sup>11</sup> So Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, <sup>12</sup> "Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink. <sup>13</sup> 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." <sup>14</sup> So he consented with them in this matter, and tested them ten days.*

*<sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> Thus the steward took away their portion of delicacies and the wine that they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.*

*<sup>17</sup> 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.*

*<sup>18</sup> Now at the end of the days, when the king had said that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>19</sup> Then the king interviewed them, and among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they served before the king. <sup>20</sup> And in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm. <sup>21</sup> Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus. (Chronological Bible, August 6, pp. 1014-1015)*

### **Daniel had Purpose of Heart**

It was the policy of the King to identify and train up the brightest and best of the best from a conquered nation to serve him in governing their people. And so, Nebuchadnezzar instructed his servant master to look among the Israelites for-

*<sup>4</sup> young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans.*

Daniel and his friends met these qualifications. They were healthy, handsome, intelligent and of noble birth, belonging to the tribe of Judah. Though this was an honor to be chosen for "Officer Training" in the Babylonian government, it meant that these precious Jewish boys would be trained in the ways of Babylonians, Babylonian customs, Babylonian ideas, Babylonian religion. They would be trained to think and live like Babylonians. Or so the officials thought! Daniel and his friends stood firm in their faith, and did not conform to the world they were thrust into, but rather as ones transformed by the power of God within them, they influenced a pagan nation toward God.

We see in verse 7 that right from the start, their names were changed from names proclaiming the name of our Living God to names representing pagan gods. Warren Wiersbe explains the meanings:

"The name Daniel means "God is my judge," but it was changed to Belteshazzar or "Bel protect his life." Hananiah means "the Lord shows grace," but his new name, Shadrach, means "command of Aku" (the moon-god). Mishael means "Who is like God?" and the new name, Meshach, means "Who is as Aku is?" Azariah means "The Lord is my help," but "Abednego" means "Servant of Nebo (Nego)." The name of the true and living God was replaced by the names of the false gods of Babylon."

The chief was attempting to destroy all external references and connections these youths had to their Living God. Little did he know that no attempt on the outside could alter their transformation on the inside. Victory would come from within.

### **1. Daniel's Commitment Fueled His Purpose of Heart**

Here they are in the palace, the royal court, set apart from their counterparts in a life of luxury and offered "a daily provision of the king's delicacies and of the wine which he drank" (v.5). For some, this would be living their best life in captivity! But for Daniel and his friends, this is where they drew the line. Though this food must have been the best in the land, eating it would make them ceremonially unclean before God because the meat had not been prepared in accordance with God's commands and more importantly, it was first sacrificed to idols. Eating it would defile them. They easily could have said they "had to eat it," that they "did not have a choice." That would have been the easy way, to compromise because of their circumstances. Daniel was committed to honoring God in all that he did, no matter the circumstances, and so he proposed another option:

*<sup>8</sup> But 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. <sup>9</sup> Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs. <sup>10</sup> 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."*

*<sup>11</sup> So Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, <sup>12</sup> "Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink. <sup>13</sup> 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." <sup>14</sup> So he consented with them in this matter and tested them ten days.*

He asked the chief to be excused from eating and drinking the food and wine generously provided. The chief feared for his own life, denying the request. He was responsible to the king for these captives and was not going to take a chance on their physical and mental

development. So Daniel approached the steward that was guarding over them with a second proposal, requesting a 10-day trial of just vegetables and water. No vegetable was unclean under Jewish law, nor was water; they would not be defiled by consuming them. Verse 9 tells us *“God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs.”* This request was granted. In His sovereignty, God intervened on Daniel’s behalf to move the official’s heart to favor. Daniel purposed in his heart to honor God, and God protected and preserved him.

*<sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> Thus the steward took away their portion of delicacies and the wine that they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.*

Victory begins with purpose of heart, fueled by commitment. Daniel was committed, devoted, loyal to his Living God, the God Most High. This commitment gave him purpose of heart. Where did this commitment come from? Possibly it started with his parents. Daniel was mid-teens when taken into captivity. Commentator Jon Courson notes that the parents of these youths were likely part of the King Josiah revival that we talked about last week. As Proverbs 22:6 tells us, *Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.* The commitment to honor and follow God that Daniel made early in his life, impacted his future life choices. Though he did not know what the future held, he knew the One that held the future and trusted Him with his life. Daniel’s commitment was foundational and unwavering.

## **2. Daniel’s Purpose of Heart Fueled His Courage**

Daniel’s purpose of heart gave him the courage to stand firm in his convictions. Everyone has convictions but are they biblical convictions based on God’s Word? Daniel’s were. We should use the Bible to filter what comes into our minds, to take every thought captive to the standard of Scripture. Scripture should take priority over opinions and experience. Daniel had a single-minded devotion to God, a foundational commitment. By faith, he had surrendered his right to run his life to the will and control of the Father. Trusting God’s sovereignty gave Daniel the courage to stand firm in his commitment and convictions. His commitment fueled his courage to act in faith, standing up for God.

And it fared well for them over the course of the three-year training:

*<sup>17</sup> 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.*

*<sup>18</sup> Now at the end of the days, when the king had said that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>19</sup> Then the king interviewed them, and among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they served before the king. <sup>20</sup> And in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm. <sup>21</sup> Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus.*

Because of their faithfulness, God gave these young men great knowledge and understanding in every kind of literature and wisdom. Daniel also understood visions and dreams of every kind. At the end of their training, the King found that none were as smart nor had understanding like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in fact, they were 10 times better than the rest.

The courage of Daniel and his friends would later be tested again, by fire, (Daniel 3) and when Daniel is thrown into the Lions' den ( Daniel 6). Obeying God was more important to them than life itself. Their commitment and courage through faithfulness in the face of these tests would ultimately lead kings to praise their Living God. Purpose of heart fueled by commitment, leading to courage became a lifestyle for Daniel all the days of his life.

Oh that we could dare to be like Daniel! It begins with commitment, then purpose of heart which gives courage to stand up for God in the face of adversity. How is the world trying to conform you? Are you drawing on the power of Christ within you, that transformed you, to stand firm in your faith? Are you influencing others toward Christ or allowing others to influence you away? Take this opportunity this week to reaffirm your commitment. Trust in His sovereignty and courageously act on that trust in faith.

In a few weeks, we will take another look at Daniel and his Kingdom-sized prayers. God is always accomplishing His kingdom purposes, even when things appear otherwise. God is sovereign over the affairs of mankind.

**God Speaks** through providence as He allows hardships to occur in the lives of those He plans to use greatly.

**God Acts** on behalf of those who graciously resist personal and spiritual defilement by granting them favor with others.

**God Reveals** His sovereignty over all believers in the face of difficult circumstances and reveals His concern and care for them.

#### **Additional Resources :**

The Wiersbe Study Bible

The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – Old Testament

What the Bible is All About, Henrietta Mears

Jon Courson's Bible Commentary, Old Testament