

The Book of Daniel

Lesson 3

Daniel 1:9–16

Divine Favor and the Power of Appeal

In this section, we tend to look at events, without considering that we are being given the consequences of previous decisions.

“But Daniel purposed in his heart ...” – Daniel 1:8

Just like Ezra (Ezra 7:10), Daniel’s victories began in the determination of the inner man—the heart. This process is clearly laid out in Scripture.

The Stair-steps of Spiritual Destiny

Results (Heb. 6:7–8, blessing or cursing)

Actions (Heb. 5:14, good or evil)

Decisions (Eph. 5:15, wise or foolish)

Priorities/values (1 Cor. 3:1, spiritual or carnal/worldly)

Attitude (1 Pet. 5:5–6, humble or arrogant)

Most, if not all of the promises of God, come with conditions. These conditions require volitional response on the part of the believer. It is not a matter of one decision, but of consistent attitudes and actions based on the Word of God. It is a Spirit-led, Word-oriented lifestyle, called the Christian way of life!

Daniel’s Appeal

Daniel’s appeal was to a lower official than Ashpenaz (Dan. 1:3). He is called a “steward” (*Melzar* – Persian derivative, “*butler*,” cf. Gen. 40:1, 5). Often, a lesser or “local” official will be more sympathetic and flexible than the higher officials. There is a book entitled, “*The Doctrine of the Lesser Magistrates*,” by Matthew J. Trewhella, that deals with the historical use of local magistrates to thwart higher tyrannical authority. One example in America would be County Sheriffs standing against the overreach of both Federal and State violations of the Constitution.

The word translated “*vegetables*” in vv. 12 and 16 is not accurate. “The word used here generally refers to the seeds used for animal feed: Cereal grains ... cooked in water to produce a porridge.” (*The IVP Bible Background Commentary* – Walton, Matthews, Chavalas).

Note: God blessed these four young men for their faithfulness and obedience, by granting them wisdom, skill, and understanding in all their training. Daniel, the obvious leader, was granted even greater spiritual insight into visions and dreams—this will be a skill he uses throughout the book.

Daniel’s Discernment

“If any of you lacks wisdom [who doesn’t?], let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” – James 1:5

1. Daniel had discernment regarding historical events (vv. 1–4). He had learned the lessons taught by the prophet Jeremiah.
2. He had discernment regarding faithful conduct in a hostile environment (vv. 5–9). He knew where to draw the line, what he could affect, and what he couldn't.
3. He had discernment in discovering the means to accomplish his goal of faithful obedience (vv. 10–13). This was a very reasonable request, which would not endanger the “steward” in any way.
4. Daniel had discernment in the ways of God (vv. 14–21). See Psalm 103:7 and Hebrews 3:10 for contrast. While Israel only saw God's works, Moses understood His ways.
5. All of this has the providence of God behind it. God gave him “*favor*” (v. 9), “*wisdom*” (v. 17), and success (vv. 19–20). Daniel outlived all the other three friends, living to see the captives return after the 70 years captivity (see the books of Ezra and Nehemiah).
6. Daniel also exercised linguistic discernment. The book, written late in his life (c. 530 B.C.), is in both Hebrew (Daniel 1, 8–12) and Aramaic (Daniel 2–7, Chaldee/Syriac). “The Aramaic portions in Daniel deal with matters pertaining to all the citizens of the Babylonian and Persian empires, whereas the Hebrew sections describe predominantly Jewish concerns and God's plans for Israel. Probably Daniel wrote the Aramaic sections for the benefit of his Gentile neighbors, and he wrote the whole book for the Jews, who could read both languages.” (*Notes on Daniel, 2023 Edition*, Dr. Thomas L. Constable).

God Blesses His Word Wherever It Is Found!

I remember, back in the 80's, reading the story of a Viet Nam prisoner of war. This prisoner was so defiant of his captors that he was kept isolated from all the other prisoners, for fear that his defiance would spread. No amount of privation or torture could break him.

He was kept in isolation and given the job of cleaning out the pit-latrines at the end of each day. He was told to get down into the pit with a bucket and scoop out the offal of all the other prisoners, carry it away, and dump it away from the camp.

One day while doing this disgusting duty, he found in the mess a small piece of paper someone had used for toilet paper. He was able to secretly hide this in his filthy clothing without the guard seeing. Later that night, he scraped the paper clean, and found the first pages of the Gospel of John, from a small pocket Bible. He read the Word of God for the first time with great interest, having had no conversation or reading material for a long time.

The next day, he found another page, and managed to “liberate” it as well. By the third day, he came upon the page from which he read these words:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” – John 3:16

That night, that courageous, defiant U.S. warrior trusted Jesus Christ for the gracious gift of eternal life!

Sometime later, by what means I don't recall after these 40 years, he was able to relate, by tap code, this story to a fellow prisoner. This prisoner was later released and related his story. The name of the brave soldier has been lost, and he died in captivity, but his amazing story lives on!

Three Great Lessons that Emerge from this Courageous Man's Story:

1. God blesses His Word wherever it is found.
2. The spiritually hungry soul does not care what vessel God uses to reach them.
3. No soul is so isolated that God cannot get His Gospel to receptive ears.

Conclusion

1. Heroes are forged in the furnace of adversity! Hard times make strong men.
2. Daniel had historical impact and became legendary in his own generation, simply by his total dedication to God's Word, and refusal to conform to false ideologies or practices.
3. Of the estimated 70 captives of the first stage of the exile, only he and the three others stand out in Scripture.
4. We, like Daniel and friends, are living in a time of great, worldwide, historical crisis. Now is the time for Spirit-led decisions to be made.
5. This generation will produce some great spiritual heroes. Let us strive to be among their ranks!

“Faith is not believing in spite of evidence—that is superstition, but rather in obeying in spite of the circumstances.” – Warren W. Wiersbe