

TO PURPOSE IN ONE'S HEART

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One of the finest examples of purity and faithfulness in the Bible is Daniel. He was a prophet of God and a man of flawless character. Daniel was taken from his home against his will to a foreign nation as a slave. While many people would be so devastated that they would begin to question their belief in God, Daniel did not! Even though he was a stranger in a strange land, he did not allow that to interfere with his dedication to God, nor did he allow it to altar his spiritual lifestyle.

While in captivity to king Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel and other young men of Israel were chosen to be a part of the king's court. One might say that they were the best of the best (Dan. 1:4). Because they were chosen for those duties, they were also granted extra privileges that the other Israelites were not, which included food from the king's table (Dan. 1:5). However, Daniel and his three friends, Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael, chose not to defile themselves with the bounty of the king's table (Dan. 1:8).

The inspired writer said it best when he said, "But Daniel **purposed** in his heart that he would not defile himself." The Merriam Webster online dictionary gives the definition of "purpose" as "the feeling of being determined to do or achieve something" (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/purposed>). The true follower of God will determine that he or she will never defile themselves with the sins of this world, just as Daniel and his friends determined.

In fact, Daniel was so upstanding that while his enemies looked for something in his life to use against him they concluded, "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find *it* against him concerning the law of his God" (Dan. 6:5). What a testimony to a young man of God! If the only thing someone can hold against another is their righteous living, then God will definitely be pleased with that individual. Even when those "trouble makers" convinced king Darius to pass a law against praying to God, Daniel still prayed (Dan. 6:10). Keep in mind, though, the penalty for breaking that law was to be cast into the lion's den to be eaten alive, yet Daniel still prayed! Such courage was rare in that day and is still very uncommon in our own day.

As faithful as Daniel was, he has not been the only one over the years to stand for righteousness and defend God. When the apostles stood before the Sanhedrin Counsel, being charged with disobeying a court order, Peter and the apostles said, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). They refused to bend to the laws of men and instead continued to preach the soul-saving Gospel of Jesus Christ. There have been many in our own time that have always stood firm in the laws of God and remained faithful in the face of temptation.

Children of God must purpose in their hearts to be faithful, just as God purposed in His heart to save mankind through His only begotten Son (Eph. 3:11). The enemies of truth were not able to prevent the establishment of the church, and they cannot stop it today! Much of the New Testament writings were given to encourage the brethren to remain strong and steadfast. When Barnabas was sent to Antioch, he "exhorted them all, that with **purpose** of heart they would cleave unto the Lord" (Acts 11:23).

May God bless the efforts of the faithful as they determine or purpose in their hearts to remain faithful regardless of the whims of man. If we are going to enjoy the eternal bliss of heaven, we must remain steadfast and faithful, always abounding in the works of God (1 Cor. 15:58).