

## Daniel 1:9-21

### The Secret to Daniel's Success - Part 2

Last week we started the book of Daniel. King Nebuchadnezzar had invaded the southern kingdom of Judah and taken the best of the young men captive. Daniel and his three friends were some of those taken captive. We finished at verse 8 where Daniel had purposed in his heart to not defile himself, so he was brave enough to make a request to the chief of the eunuchs. He was willing to take a stand so that he wouldn't have to disobey God. Being faithful and obedient to God was more important to him than anything else.

The verse that characterises Daniel is:

Daniel 6:10 NKJV

Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, **as was his custom since early days.**

Daniel was abiding in Christ, and what we see in his behaviour, words and blessings are just the fruit of his abiding in Christ, of making his relationship with God the most important part of his life.

John 15:5 NKJV

"I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

Daniel, like the many others before and after him, is an example of what God can do when someone has purposed in their heart to make God number one. They have decided that they will, by the power of the Holy Spirit in them, obey the first commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me." In other words, don't love anything more than God. Make loving God, abiding in his presence and growing in your relationship with Him the most important part of your life. As Paul says, "nothing compares to knowing Christ — everything else is just dung."

We can learn a lot from Daniel and apply it to our own lives:

"Daniel was a man of God in worldly Babylon, and Christians are always God's people in the midst of those who do not honour and in fact oppose their divine King." Basically, we are God's people living in an ungodly world and it takes courage and faith to go against the flow and go against what the world is saying.

This week we continue in verse 9 of Daniel chapter 1.

We'll pick it up in verse 5...

Daniel 1:5-21 NKJV

**<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.

#### **Daniel 1:9 NKJV**

**Now God had brought Daniel into the favour and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs.**

This is quite a sacrifice to make to serve the Lord — not that we know for sure that Daniel was made a eunuch. Daniel had to say goodbye to any dreams he may have had concerning a wife and children. I'm not sure how I would handle being made a eunuch. It's not just the physical procedure, but the fact that Daniel is now a slave to a pagan king. He has no rights, no freedom, no independence. But notice that Daniel is not angry or resentful concerning his circumstances. Instead he just keeps on trusting God.

There is an application for us here, as we are also slaves — slaves of Christ.

#### **Matthew 20:27-28 NKJV**

And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—<sup>28</sup> just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

#### **Matthew 25:21 NKJV**

His lord said to him, 'Well *done*, good and faithful servant (slave); you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

#### **John 15:20 NKJV**

Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant (slave) is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

## ***We Are Slaves for Jesus*** - By The Voice of the Martyrs

On a recent trip to Laos, VOM workers enjoyed fellowship with Christians from several people groups, including the Khmu. Although the Khmu are the original inhabitants of Laos, many Laotians look down on them as culturally backward. Sometimes people call them *kha*, meaning "slave," an insulting reference to a time when the Khmu were taken captive by invaders.

The Khmu, of course, resent being called slaves. But the Greek word for "slave," *doulos*, is also the second most common word used to describe Christians in Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. The word *doulos* occurs more than 100 times in Greek manuscripts, second only to *mathetes*, meaning "disciple."

It is difficult to find the word "slave" in most translations of the Bible. From the first translation of the New Testament—Greek to Latin—the shocking term for "slave" was toned down with a more socially acceptable word meaning "servant." A look at the word "servant" in Strong's Exhaustive Concordance reveals the additional, enriching meaning behind the word.

Greek manuscripts of the New Testament use several different Greek words for "servant," including *diakonos*, *sakir*, and *misthios*. These words convey the meaning of a servant who performs a service and who may sometimes be paid. However, a *doulos* is more than a servant. A *doulos* is bought for a price and is bound to serve his master.

As bought and paid for *douloi* (plural of *doulos*), we understand that "freedom in Christ" does not mean we are free to serve Jesus only when we feel like it. Remaining in Christ, being bound to Him as a slave to a master, provides true freedom from the desires and priorities of the world. In 1 Peter 2:16, the apostle writes that although we are "as free," we should live as *douloi*, or fully committed slaves of God.

References to freedom in the New Testament do not imply freedom from Jesus, but rather freedom from sin or religious customs of men. In one sense, even Jesus was not "free" to do what He wanted. In John 8:29, Jesus says that He came to do the will of His Father. We, His *douloi*, are commanded to follow in His steps. Although Jesus calls us His friends (John 15:15), He lovingly and jealously regards us as His committed slaves. Jesus uses the *doulos* metaphor notably and powerfully in Matt. 20:27 and 25:21, Mark 9:35, and John 15:20. The term *doulos* continues to appear throughout the New Testament, including several times in the Book of Revelation as a title of honour for the saints.

As slaves of Jesus, one reason we may be persecuted is that the world sees our commitment to following Him and is angry that it can never own us; we have been bought by the blood of Christ. Our true freedom is being bound in a relationship with our Master, and the world can never take this freedom away from us.

The VOM workers asked the Khmu Christians how they felt about losing homes and being beaten because they are Christians. Surprisingly, many of the Khmu replied that these sufferings encourage them. They said that their own suffering proves that Jesus is God because He told them in the Bible that Christians would be persecuted.

We wonder if these *kha*, loyal slaves of Jesus Christ, know that Jesus Himself took the nature of a slave. Jesus became a *kha* for us all, submitting to the Father with unquestioned obedience in order to secure our salvation (Phil. 2:5-11). Likewise, He requires us to be of an obedient mind and complete the will of His Father, no matter what we may face.

To many in the world we will always look like losers, but Jesus' "strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). Like Jesus, we are more than conquerors. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are victorious over the flesh, the world, and ultimately the grave.

Whenever we Christians are insulted in the courts, in the press or in the classroom, we—like the *kha*—are free to rejoice that these attacks from the world prove that Jesus is God. We are free to ignore seemingly terrible consequences in order to share His saving grace.

and love with more passion. As *douloi* of Jesus who were paid for with the price of His blood, He owns us. We are His. He is our Lord.

## **The results of Daniel's courageous decision — God gave Daniel favour and goodwill with the authorities**

### **Daniel 1:9 NKJV**

**Now God had brought Daniel into the favour and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs.**

v 9 **God had brought Daniel into the favour:** God did not abandon those who stood for Him. Daniel entrusted himself to God and God came through—though it was no doubt a stretching experience for Daniel and his friends.

v 9 **Into the favour and goodwill of the chief:** God moved upon the authorities so they regarded Daniel with **goodwill**; but God also worked through the wise actions of Daniel to cultivate this goodwill. Our obedience will open doors to new opportunities for greater obedience.

### **Daniel 1:10 NKJV**

**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."**

"If you don't eat the feast that's before you," the prince of the eunuchs said to Daniel and his friends, "you're not going to be as healthy looking as the others. I want to get ahead in the empire—not lose my head!"

### **Daniel 1:11–13 NKJV**

**<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."**

### **Daniel suggests a plan**

v 12 **Please test your servants:** Daniel saw the situation through the steward's eyes and addressed *his* legitimate concerns. He wouldn't let the chief of the eunuchs pay the price for Daniel's conscience. In it all, Daniel was willing to put himself and his faith in God to the test.

*Daniel's approach was reasonable.* He could have gone on a hunger strike or made some other kind of protest. Instead he made a polite request, he made it to the right person and said, "Put us to the test."

*Daniel made a godly and wise compromise with the **chief of the eunuchs**.* He certainly did not compromise in an ungodly way, but he showed the wisdom James 3:17 speaks of:

### **James 3:17 NKJV**

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, **willing to yield**, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

...without hypocrisy: “It is of no use for a man to say, ‘I have made up my mind upon certain things,’ and to keep doggedly fighting over those matters, while, at the same time, the whole of his life is unkind, ungenerous, and unlovable. Yes, by all manner of means be a martyr if you like; but do not martyr everybody else.” (Spurgeon)

v 12 **Vegetables to eat and water to drink:** **Vegetables** refers to all kinds of grains and plants, not strictly vegetables. Basically, this was a vegetarian diet, chosen because the meat at the king’s table was not prepared in a kosher manner or it was sacrificed to idols.

“Daniel was not presumptuous and he did not wrongly test God in this situation, because he had both a command to obey and a promise to trust. Exodus 23:25 says, *So you shall serve the Lord your God, and He will bless your bread and your water*” (Jon Courson).

### **Daniel 1:14–16 NKJV**

**14 So he consented with them in this matter, and tested them ten days.**

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

v 14 **So he consented with them in this matter:** This was the hand of God at work. The chief of the eunuchs had all the power in this situation. Daniel and his friends seemed to be completely at his mercy. Yet God moved upon this man, and **he consented with them in this matter.**

v 15 **Their features appeared better and fatter:** This was the hand of God at work. There was no *biological* reason why a vegetarian diet should make them appear **better and fatter**. Perhaps their diet would make them appear the *same* as the other Jewish young men who ate the king’s food, but not **better and fatter**.

### **Daniel 1:17-19 NKJV**

**17 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.**

**18 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. 19 Then the king interviewed them, and among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they served before the king.**

Jon Courson: “You just can’t out-give God. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego gave themselves wholeheartedly to the Lord and what happened? They found favour with both God and man. When you give God your energy, talent, money, or ability, He will not “owe you one.” He’ll give back to you exceedingly abundantly above all you can ask or think” (Ephesians 3:20).

The disciples certainly didn’t lose out by loaning their boat to use as a floating pulpit, for in return He blessed them with so many fish their boat almost sunk (Luke 5). When the little boy gave his lunch to the Lord, he was one of the 5,000 in attendance who were filled to overflowing (Mark 6). When the widow gave her last bit of meal and oil to Elijah, she never lacked again (1 Kings 17).

One of the great lies of Satan is to try and get us to think that if we serve Him, we will be unpopular and ostracised. That’s just not true. Parents, show your kids the example of

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Say, “Here’s some young men who refused to give in to the pressures and pleasures of the world—and they found favour with God and with men, as well.” Yes, you will experience persecution if you give your life to the Lord—but there will be a sterling quality about your life and an attractiveness that comes only from walking with God. Violate that and you’ll miss out on so much that God wants to do in your life.”

v 17 **God gave them knowledge and skill:** The special intellectual ability of Daniel and his companions was not due to their diet, but to the special intervention of the Lord.

David Guzik: “These young Jewish men *gave themselves to the Lord* in a remarkable way and God *blessed them* in a remarkable way. J. Edwin Orr remembered something Billy Brice said to him: “Edwin, if Christians would only give over and above their reasonable service, the Lord would give over and above the usual blessing.” Daniel and his friends understood this principle, and God blessed them for acting on it.”

v 17 **Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams:** This shows that purity of heart and faithfulness to God come before enlightenment in divine mysteries. Daniel would later receive great revelation, but now he simply showed himself a dedicated follower of God.

v 19 **None was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah:** These young men from Jerusalem were immersed in the study of Babylonian culture, literature, and religion; yet they remained faithful to God. The work of the prophets like Jeremiah, Zephaniah and Habakkuk was not in vain. They were *in* Babylon, but not *of* Babylon. There is yet hope for our children in public schools, but we must make sure that we teach them to stand up for what they believe, to be able to defend the bible and give a reason for the hope that is in them.

### **Daniel 1:20-21 NKJV**

**<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.**

“Daniel was probably fifteen years old at this time. He lived until he was at least eighty-five. For the entire seventy years of the Babylonian captivity, Daniel was in a place of leadership and service because God had honoured him” (Jon Courson).

v 21 **Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus:** “Daniel had a long, successful career in the worst of circumstances. He worked for tyrants who thought nothing of killing their staff and advisors, much less of firing them. His employer suffered the worst kind of hostile takeover when the Medo-Persian Empire conquered the Babylonian Empire.

Daniel and his friends show us that inner conviction can overcome *any* outer pressure, and that God-honouring convictions yield God-given rewards” (David Guzik).

## **The Big Picture — 1. God is sovereign.**

The interesting thing about his beginning of the book, however, is that it is not the four men, whose stories will be told in subsequent chapters, who are said to have been brought back to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar but rather “the articles from the temple of God” that

Nebuchadnezzar “put in the treasure house of his god.” That is no incidental or irrelevant beginning. On the contrary, it is the theme of the book and the key to everything that follows.

As the story will show, Nebuchadnezzar was an exceedingly arrogant man, and the conquests he made were understood by him to be proof of his superiority (or the superiority of his gods, which he did not always clearly distinguish from himself) to all others. Jews boasted that their God, Jehovah, was all-powerful. Nebuchadnezzar believed that he was greater than that God. So when he forced the capitulation of Jerusalem, his cause and his gods seemed vindicated. It was in demonstration of that conviction that he brought the gold and silver articles that had been dedicated to the service of Jehovah in Jerusalem to Babylon to be placed in the treasure house of his gods. The heathen gods had triumphed! Nebuchadnezzar was sovereign!

In this case, as in so many other historical situations, appearances were deceiving. Actually, Jehovah was as much in charge of the overthrow of Jerusalem as he had been many times earlier in its defence. In fact, it was Jehovah who had brought on the destruction, sending it as a punishment for the people’s sins. Now, in spite of the fact that he had “delivered Jehoiakim into [Nebuchadnezzar’s] hand,” God was going to show that he was sovereign.

Gleason L. Archer, puts it like this:

The principal theological emphasis in Daniel is the absolute sovereignty of Yahweh, the God of Israel. At a time when it seemed to all the world that his cause was lost and that the gods of the heathen had triumphed, causing his temple to be burned to the ground, it pleased the Lord strikingly and unmistakably to display his omnipotence. The theme running through the whole book is that the fortunes of kings and the affairs of men are subject to God’s decrees, and that he is able to accomplish his will despite the most determined opposition of the mightiest potentates or kings on earth.

The miracles recorded in chapters 1–6 demonstrate God’s sovereignty on behalf of his saints. The surpassing health of Daniel and his three companions after ten days of a simple vegetable diet (ch. 1); the miraculous disclosure to Daniel of the contents of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (ch. 2); the amazing deliverance of Daniel’s three friends from the fiery furnace (ch. 3); the previous warning to Nebuchadnezzar of seven years of dehumanising insanity because of his overweening pride (ch. 4); the terrifying prediction inscribed on the banquet wall of Belshazzar, followed by a speedy fulfilment of the same (ch. 5); and Daniel’s deliverance from the lions’ den all clearly show that the Lord God of Israel was in charge of the tide of human affairs and was perfectly able to deliver his people from pagan oppression during their captivity.

The great and most important theme of Daniel is that there is but one God, who is Jehovah, and that he is sovereign over the events of history.

## **The Big Picture — 2. Secular humanism or atheism vs God.**

It reminds us that the struggle between Nebuchadnezzar and God, recorded in Daniel, is actually only one example of that greater struggle between the world’s way of doing things and God’s way of doing things, which has prevailed at all times and prevails today. It is this that makes Daniel a contemporary book.

The chief characteristic of Babylon in Nebuchadnezzar’s time was what we would call its radical secular humanism. I say this because of a statement Nebuchadnezzar makes later on in Daniel, in the fourth chapter: “Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal

residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?” (Dan. 4:30). This is a true statement in one sense. Nebuchadnezzar had built Babylon, and he had undoubtedly done it for his own glory. But in forgetting God, who had given him the opportunity to create such magnificence, Nebuchadnezzar was actually taking God’s glory to himself. Like all secular humanists, he was saying that all that exists is *of* man, *by* man, and *for* man’s glory.

It is good to keep this in mind as you realise that Daniel had to go through three years of training in secular humanism, which would have included some form of evolution, yet he didn’t lose his faith. Why? Because He was grounded in the Word of God. Parents, again, it’s so important that we ground our children in the truth of the word of God so that when they are exposed to the lies, they will be able to defend their faith, to have a reason for the hope that is in them, and so be able to stand against the wiles and fiery darts of the evil one.

At the same time, while the world is living by its own standards and for its own glory in opposition to God, there is another people who know God and honestly try to please him. In this story they are Daniel and his friends. They are not the most visible people, just as the kingdom they represent is not nearly so visible as the kingdom of this world. But they are substantial people. And in the final analysis they are the only ones who make any real difference for good.

Are you with Daniel? Are you a member of his special band? No one is by nature in the company of these servants of the true God. All are born into the Satan’s kingdom. But God’s kingdom can be entered by new birth through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour. Jesus said, “No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again” (John 3:3). The doors of that kingdom stand open for any who will enter it. The New Testament says of Abraham, another citizen of the heavenly city who lived for God in the earthly kingdom, “By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (Hebrews 11:9–10).

If you are not a member or citizen of the city of God, I invite you to become one now through faith in Jesus Christ, and then begin to live here in a way that makes the invisible kingdom visible to many.

Next week we get into the first prophecy. The statue with the head of gold, which represents world history in detail up to the time of Christ, and then in the end times.

Today we will end with a reminder as to what it means to be a slave for Christ.

Philippians 2:1-13 NLT

*Have the Attitude of Christ*

<sup>1</sup> Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? <sup>2</sup> Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.

<sup>3</sup> Don’t be selfish; don’t try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Don’t look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

<sup>5</sup> You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. <sup>6</sup> Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. <sup>7</sup> Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, <sup>8</sup> he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a

criminal's death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honour and gave him the name above all other names, <sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Shine Brightly for Christ <sup>12</sup> Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important. Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. <sup>13</sup> For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

What does a slave or bond servant look like in the bible, what do they do?

1. They depend on their master (God) for everything.
2. They are willing servants, meaning that they forsake everything else willingly. Explain about the awl and the door post, not wanting to leave the masters house, willingly giving up all rights (Exodus 21:1-6). A bond slave or *doulos* serves for love for life.
3. As demonstrated by Christ, honour only comes after humiliation or suffering. We, as God's servants, need to understand that when we go through hard times, God has the greater or eternal good in mind. God looks ahead to do for us what will benefit us for eternity.