

If I say purity, I am sure a few different things may come to mind, maybe sexual purity. Sexual purity is very important, 1 Thessalonians 4 says "God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God" Today's society sells us everything, including lust, if we want it, we can have it. I am a fan of Christian rap, KB, Andy Mineo, and many more. In one song it is talking about what it means to be a man. How we blame our vulgar sexual thoughts or actions on women, it's because of how they dress, it's because of how they act, it's because of the pictures they post. But how does someone else's clothes, actions, or photos determine how we act? We cannot control the world, but we can control what we look at and who we hang out with. If you know certain individuals dress in a way that may tempt you don't be around them, if their actions make you unable to make clear decisions then stay away from them. If their pictures or posts cause you to stumble, then don't follow them. So, it is important that we watch sexual purity. It is important for our boyfriend or girlfriend, our marriage but most importantly our relationship with Christ

What about moral purity, the ability to do the right thing. This falls into many different aspects of life, personal and business transactions, being honest, and keeping your word. This is where you see a lot of someone's character. I have tried to teach my boys that if you cross this world, they will do their best to strip you of everything. They can take your money, possessions, loved ones, even your rights but they cannot take your word. They can try to spin it or make it seem like something else. But if you keep your word everyone who knows you will see that. I have told them if you tell someone you are going to do something, you do it, even if it hurts! One of my boys, I won't mention which one had to learn the hard way that the parents always find out. You may as well just tell the truth from the beginning, because it is always worse when the truth finally does come out. How many of you read reviews online before you go try somewhere new to eat? Or buy something from online? Now a days more and more people are conducting business online, and with almost all sites there is a way to leave feed back on the transaction. So, if that is how they make their money most of them will try anything to keep you happy and give them a 5-star review. But what happens to those who don't..... I don't know they are not online anymore.

Today we are going to be talking about purity of the heart or spiritual purity. A lot of folks are these days easily swayed, have you ever seen someone change sides of the fence so quickly that they did not even seem to ever be on the other side? I see it a lot, and it is hilarious! Usually goes something like this, I meet someone for the first time or someone that I have known for a long time but have not seen in years. We start talking about what ever usually cars or fabrication stuff. They get excited or upset about some event they encountered. They get to cussing up a storm, and talking about people, acting like they normally would. Then I get my turn to talk and of course I mention the fact that I am a youth pastor. You should see their faces when they hear that, usually the first thing they say is that they grew up in church, and then ask where I go to church. They suddenly start asking about our ministries, children's programs and what time service starts. The whole time I am just grinning, and thinking would you be asking these questions if I would not have brought it up? NNOOOOO, church is the last thing on their mind! It is funny how quick they change their whole view because of who is around. Daniel had the same decision to make.

Purity of Mind Purity of Protest Purity of Heart

Vs 1-2 You know how in those times names normally meant something. Jehoiakim actually means Yahweh raises up, but this guy could not have been raised up any further from that. Jehoiakim was put in as king of Jerusalem by the pharaoh of Egypt. SO, this guy was destined to fail from the start.

The king of Babylon was a man named Nebuchadnezzar; the Egyptians came to invade Babylon but were defeated. Ole Neb decided to chase down the fleeing army all the way down to Sinai. So, either on the way down or on their way back they made a quick stop in Jerusalem to besiege them too. The main reason Nebuchadnezzar attacked them was because they had been loyal to the pharaoh of Egypt.

After overpowering them he decided to take all he wanted from the house of God. It says he was given some of the articles of the house of God. I'm not sure if they chose what to give him, or if they hid all of the priceless items so he would not take them. Either way Nebuchadnezzar placing these items in the Babylonian temple was a strong message saying, "my god is better than your God".

Vs 3-4 Along with the items he took, he also wanted the strongest, smartest, and most experienced young men. This very well could have been for a couple of reasons.

1. This would make it difficult for the future generation. The best they had have now been taken away. I often feel like that has happened to the millennials.
2. This would help strengthen his city.

Purity of Mind

Vs 5-7 This sentence may not seem like too big of a deal today, but back then this was a huge deal! The difference in what the wealthy eat and what us commoners eat is not that different. At least as far as I can tell. But let me tell you about a place to eat like a king. There is a restaurant in Baltimore called Fogo De Chow, this is the kind of place that you have to have a reservation 2 weeks in advance just to get in, valet parking the works! You don't even have to call the server to the table when you want more, they just keep making rounds. I would consider this a wealthy place to eat as for 4 of us Jenn and I paid \$100 and my sister paid the balance of \$400. It was good, very good but we have found similar places with food just as good for a fraction of the cost. So even peasants like me can eat like that.

But in those days, it was a major difference. The wealthy ate meat, vegetables, fruit, with bread and wine. But the rest of the nation ate cheap grains, wheat barley and oats. They would have occasionally had fish, honey and milk.

So, for these young Jewish men to get to eat like a king would have been a great honor, and most likely something many may have never had, which could have been for a couple reasons. But we will talk a little more about that later.

We do not know how many of these young men were taken but we only get the names of 4 of them. 1 name you have almost defiantly heard of Daniel, the other 3 may not be so familiar with. They are Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

As they are settled in Babylon Nebuchadnezzar gives them all new names.

Daniel goes from God is my Judge to Belteshazzar meaning Bel's prince. Bel was actually Marduk who was the chief god of Babylon, what a smack in the face for Daniel.

Hananiah = beloved by the lord to Shadrach meaning Illumined by Sun-god

Mishael = Who is as God to Meshach meaning who is like shach believed to be the Babylonian goddess Venus

Azariah = the Lord is my help to Abed Nego meaning servant of Nego

They were set up to do a 3-year training program to learn all the Babylonian ways. The purpose of the food, the names and education was simple, to indoctrinate them. To get these young men to leave behind their Hebrew culture and God. The kings wanted everyone to look to them for their every need.

Satan does this to us all today too. He names us according to the world, tells us we can call ourselves what ever we want. He feeds us what the world has to offer, if we want it, we can have it. And he educates us in the ways of the world. If you do not think this is an issue, sit and talk with a young child for any length of time and you will see that they know way more then they should for their age. Things that I did not learn until I was much older. All this does is steal their innocence and childhood. It is horrible that they are force to grow up so quick by getting to much of the wrong kind of information to young. He would have us believe that we can say, do, and have what ever we want with no consequences. And boy does he have so many fooled.

Vs 8-9 Daniel knew that this was not a good situation for him to be in. His religion told him he should not eat certain things, and we know how religion works right. You do it out of habit, or because you have always been told you just shouldn't. But Daniels reason was because of his relationship with God. This food went against God in at least 3 ways.

1. It was not kosher,
2. It was most likely sacrificed to idols,
3. It implied fellowship with the host.

In this case it would have looked like Daniel and his friends where buddy-buddy with Nebuchadnezzar. They where not there because they wanted to be. Ultimately for Daniel it goes back to the root of sin as they knew was eating the forbidden food.

Daniel could have made a big deal of several things that were being forced upon him. There are some people who may not like their name and would like to change it, but how many of you would like to be forced to change your name?

Talking about changing names, my younger brother was about around 8 when he got made at our mother because she did not name him Sting. For those of you who do not know who Sting is, he was a professional wrestler in the late 80s and early 90s. He who was my brothers favorite and got even more mad when she would not change his name to Sting now that he wanted her to.

Daniel did not pitch a fit about that, because he knew who he was and did not care what others called him. He did not mind the Babylonian education because he knew what he believed. But the food on the other hand was a direct disobedience to God's word.

Refusing the kings food posed a potential deadly punishment. Ancient kings were known for severe and sadistic punishments especially to those who directly crossed them. Nebuchadnezzar murdered the sons of a king right in front of him, then gouged out his eyes so the last memory would always be of the murder of his sons. This was not a man to be playing games with.

Daniel had to be sure that his mind was pure so that he knew who he was, knew what he believed, and what God says will defile us.

Purity of Mind Purity of Protest

Vs 10-13 Daniel asks the guard to allow them to not eat the king's food, even though the guard is worried for his life. This was another time that without God stepping in and working even through a non believer to fulfill His plan.

Daniel could have gone about it so many other ways. He could have just gone on a hunger strike and not ate. I feel as though the king would definitely take offense to that. He could have demanded that they feed him something other than this delicious looking food fit for a king, once again probably not going to end well. Instead, he trusts God and requests in polite manner to put them to a test.

In James 3 it says "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 with out hypocrisy.

Imagine all the protest that have been going on over the last few years, I will never understand how causing property damage and stealing will help bring justice to the death of someone. There is a right way to protest and clearly a wrong way.

So, Daniel says give us 10 days and if we look worse than the rest then we will eat the king's food. I'm not sure what is so different about the vegetables and water is that they consumed but when I try that it doesn't make a difference in 10 months let alone 10 days.

Vs 14-16 There was nothing special about the food or water, in fact there is no biological reason why a vegetarian diet would have made them appear better and fatter. It was his faithfulness to God that made the difference. Exodus 23:25 reads "so you shall serve the LORD your God, and He will bless your bread and water."

Daniel proves that if we allow God to lead our protest then there will be a different outcome.

Purity of Mind Purity of Protest Purity of Heart

Vs 17-21 Daniel and his 3 friends excelled above all the others, this was not due to their diet, it was because the Lord found favor in them and gave them the wisdom they needed. If Christians would give over and above their reasonable service. the Lord would give over and above the usual blessing.

Purity of heart and faithfulness to God always has to happen before enlightenment. If we stay pure to the word of God, then like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah we can be surrounded by foreign cultures, foods and religions and still be blessed by God.

Can you be in Babylon and not of Babylon. Can you have a pure mind, pure protest and pure heart?