

A Quick Word... “When Faithful Obedience Requires Civil Disobedience”

By Kayla Alphonse

Read: Daniel 1

Sing: “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus”

Pray: “Lord, please open my mind and heart to Your word. Speak to me, Lord. I’m listening.”

In Daniel chapter 1, we meet four young men—Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah—who are living under an empire that does not share their faith, their values, or their story. They are captives in Babylon. The king is trying to reshape them to fit in with Babylonian culture: new names, new education, new diet, new identity. Nothing here looks openly evil. The food is rich. The opportunity is elite. The pressure is subtle. But that is where the trouble begins. Assimilation to the Babylonian nation is a quiet departure from the laws of God.

Daniel understood this early on and “resolved not to defile himself” (v.8) by eating from the king’s table. Other bible translations say that Daniel “purposed in his heart” (v.8, NKJV) not to eat the royal rations. This was not a rebellious impulse—it was a settled conviction. Daniel did not refuse to eat the king’s food to be difficult. He refused because, even though he was taken from his homeland and stripped of the outward signs of his identity, Daniel still considered himself under the law of God. And for him, that meant that certain things could not go into his body. His obedience to God put him at odds with the king’s assignment. The word for us from this is that obedience to God will sometimes put you at odds with the systems you are living under. **Faithful obedience to God may sometimes require civil disobedience to human authority.**

It is important to note here that Daniel did not insult the king or slander those working for the king. Instead, he is respectful, disciplined, and still unapologetically faithful. Daniel honored authority without surrendering allegiance. He asks the person in charge of him for permission and proposes an alternative. Thanks be to God, the

person in charge of him agrees and shows him favor. But to be sure: Daniel's obedience came with risk. Saying "no" to Babylon could have cost him his life.

This story from Daniel's life teaches us that obedience is not passive. Sometimes obedience looks like quiet resistance, like saying "I can't go along with that." And sometimes faith means trusting God with the consequences of doing what is right. But it all starts with resolve, the faithful commitment not to compromise when the pressure is low.

Another thing to catch here: Daniel did not wait until the plate was in front of him before he made up his mind. Daniel had already drawn the line while things were still calm, when, to Babylon, it was only a matter of refusing certain foods. He decided in advance what he would and would not do. The lesson for us is this: Faithful obedience must be decided in advance, not negotiated in the heat of the moment, or in the middle of a crisis. Why? Crisis exposes what was—or was not—settled beforehand. And you cannot have a discussion or appoint a committee about obedience in crisis. If obedience becomes a discussion crisis, conviction is already in trouble.

From the standpoint of history, every movement toward justice has come about by people who understood that when human systems demand what God forbids—or forbid what God requires—obedience to God must come first. People who were told to comply, stay quiet, and wait pushed forward as a matter of faithful conscience, which looked like choosing conviction over comfort. Like Daniel, they were not reckless. They were resolved. They knew what Daniel knew: A faith that bends under pressure will collapse under persecution.

Church people, please pick up what is being shared here in the context of today: Babylon never asks for everything at once. It always starts small. Just eat the food. Just take the name. Just go along to get along. Compromise always presents itself as reasonable, practical, good-intentioned, and harmless—until... Daniel understood that disobedient compromise with God now would influence his ability to obey in the future. If he surrendered his convictions here, there would be no strength left when the furnace came, or when the lions' den opened.

At the end of chapter 1, we see that God honors Daniel's obedience. When we honor God with courageous obedience, even in small decisions, God can use our faithfulness to change rooms and systems. God honors Daniel not because he was loud, but because he was firm. God honors Daniel not because he was defiant, but because he was decisive. God gives Daniel favor, wisdom, and influence inside the very system he refused to compromise for.

So, think on this: considering this quick word from Daniel 1 and what is going on around us in our country, what have you already resolved, or purposed in your heart?

Reflect: What have you already resolved, or purposed in your heart, on matters of justice in America?