



Daniel

IN THE LIONS' DEN

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Daniel 6:11-23

Daniel's jealous rivals trick Darius the King into making a law that for thirty days no prayers should be addressed to any god or man but Darius himself; anyone who disobeys this edict is to be thrown to the lions. But Daniel continued to kneel down in prayer three times a day, giving thanks to God, just as he had always done.

The men who had spoken to the king watched Daniel and saw him praying to his God for help. They went back to the king and said, "Didn't you make a law that forbids anyone to pray to any god or human except you for the next thirty days? And doesn't the law say that everyone who disobeys it will be thrown into a pit of lions?"

"Yes, that's the law I made," the king agreed. "And just like all written laws of the Medes and Persians, it cannot be changed." The men then told the king, "That Jew named Daniel, who was brought here as a captive, refuses to obey you or the law that you ordered to be written. And he still prays to his god three times a day." The king was really upset to hear about this, and for the rest of the day he tried to think how he could save Daniel.

At sunset the men returned and said, "Your Majesty, remember that no written law of the Medes and Persians can be changed, not even by the king." So Darius ordered Daniel to be brought out and thrown into a pit of lions. But he said to Daniel, "You have been faithful to your God, and I pray that he will rescue you."

A stone was rolled over the pit, and it was sealed. Then Darius and his officials stamped the seal to show that no one should let Daniel out. All night long the king could not sleep. He did not eat anything, and he would not let anyone come in to entertain him.

At daybreak the king got up and ran to the pit. He was anxious and shouted, "Daniel, you were faithful and served your God. Was he able to save you from the lions?" Daniel answered, "Your Majesty, I hope you live forever! My God knew that I was innocent, and he sent an angel to keep the lions from eating me. Your Majesty, I have never done anything to hurt you." The king was relieved to hear Daniel's voice, and he gave orders for him to be taken out of the pit. Daniel's faith in his God had kept him from being harmed.

Commentary

During the time that Daniel was in exile from Judah, various kings came and went. However, such was Daniel's God-given skill as a government adviser that he held on to his position at court, even when the kingdom of Babylon fell and the Persian empire took over. King Darius gave Daniel authority and power as a state governor, but this made some people very jealous.

As a faithful Jew, Daniel would not honour any human being more than God, so when the other advisers got the king to agree to a month of complete loyalty to the king alone, it was bound to cause a problem for Daniel. The king was caught in a trap because, try as he might, he couldn't change the law that had been passed, and so Daniel had to be punished for his daily prayers to God. The fact that God stood by Daniel and saved him from death in a lions' den was a miracle that impressed the king so much that he told his whole country to worship the one true God.

Questions

- ▶ Daniel was top adviser to several different kings. What important qualities and gifts do you think he had?
- ▶ What gave Daniel the strength to stick to his prayer routines, even when he knew it could lead to his own death?
- ▶ What might help you to remember to pray every day?
- ▶ Daniel's rescue from the lions' den is one of the great miracles of the Bible. How might Daniel have described it to his friends afterwards?



Visual aid

Arrange to sit near a window and, if at all possible, face west. This is the direction that Daniel faced, looking towards Jerusalem from Babylon, when he talked with God each day.



Activity idea

Try retelling the story in a series of short phrases with sound effects. Rehearse the following together and then create your drama: cheers for the new king; whispers of jealousy from the advisers; the shouted proclamation of the law to 'bow down to the king'; Daniel's quiet prayer at the window; the angry murmurs from the advisers; the king's fears and worries; the roar of the lions; the stone rolled over the den; the king's restless night; the king's shout of hope; Daniel's words 'God has sent an angel'; the king's cheer of relief.



Prayer idea

Daniel prayed three times a day. Pray these short prayers in the morning, at lunchtime and at bedtime respectively.

- Lord God, thank you for the gift of a new day.
- Father God, help us to trust you in everything we do today.
- Loving God, thank you for keeping me safe all day long.

Key verse

"In the same way that he had always done, he knelt down in prayer three times a day, giving thanks to God" (Daniel 6:10).

New Testament story link

Acts 16:23-31: Like Daniel, Paul and Silas end up in prison because of their faith in God, but God rescues them miraculously.

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