

THE STORY OF DANIEL

by

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“Aunt Hattie’s Bible Stories” for Boys and Girls

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CHAPTER SEVEN

DANIEL IN THE LIONS’ DEN

DARIUS, the Mede, who now became king of the world empire, set up a new order of government. He appointed a hundred and twenty princes to rule over the provinces and over these were three presidents to whom the princes made report.

I think Darius realized how necessary it was that these presidents should be well chosen. Perhaps he looked over the men of his court and also those whom he had brought with him and said to himself, “One president, well-informed as to court matters, should be from the Babylonians and the other two from my own men. Let me see. The night we took the city there was an old man by the name of Daniel who displayed much good judgment and unusual wisdom in interpreting the affairs of King Belshazzar. I’ll make him the first of my presidents.”

As time went on I think Darius frequently called Daniel to counsel with him for he found **“an excellent spirit of wisdom in him.”**

So much did he appreciate Daniel’s clear and able judgment that he had in mind to set him over his whole realm.

Of all of the sins of the human heart envy is the most deadly. The officers of Darius’ court soon came to see the unusual ability and superior knowledge of this grand old man, Daniel, and because of this they came to hate him with a perfect hatred. Perhaps something like this took place among them.

“I think that old man, Daniel, is getting altogether too prominent around here. Pretty soon he will think he is the king himself.”

“You are right. When some of us had a scheme—and a clever one, too, to make a little money on the side, he caught us up right away. He has a keen mind, and, so far as government affairs are concerned, none of us can get by so long as he is the first president.”

“What can be done about it?”

“I have an idea,” said one of the princes. “Daniel is one of the Hebrew captives and lives near me. He still believes in the God of the Hebrews and prays to Him three times a day with his windows open towards the city of Jerusalem. The only way we can catch him is regarding the law of his God.”

“You are quite right,” heartily joined the others, “but how can that be managed?”

Putting their heads together they plotted the death of Daniel by laying a trap for the king. It was a seemingly innocent and flattering proposal.

I imagine I can see the committee as, bowing with mock humility, they came into the presence of the king.

“King Darius, live forever! All of the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save to you, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions.

“Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it cannot be changed according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.”

It was as though they had said, “O king, live forever! You are so wonderful that we wish to give you great honor. For a period of thirty days we want to worship you as our only god and, so particular shall we be in carrying out this honor, that if we find anyone in the kingdom worshipping any other god than you he shall be cast into the den of lions. Your majesty, sign the decree and make it a law that cannot be changed.”

Many great men and women have been led into trouble by flattering words. Solomon said, “**A man that flattereth his neighbor spreadeth a net for his feet.**”

King Darius was no exception to the rule. He was greatly lifted up by the words of his subjects. To be worshipped as God was indeed no small favor. Not every king had such honor thrust upon him by his people.

Little did he realize the full meaning of the decree he had so flippantly signed. To begin with, they lied, for they said, “All of the presidents make the decree.” Daniel was the first president and surely he had not aided in issuing the paper.

But it wasn't long until he heard about it and I can see his kindly face grow sorrowful and full of pity for the ones who had planned his destruction.

“O well, God will excuse me for thirty days. I can keep my windows closed and pray silently and then I'll save my own life. Everyone has a right to look out for himself.”

Do you think our Daniel said such words? Not by any means.

“Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open toward Jerusalem, he kneeled down upon his knees three times a day, and gave thanks before his God, as he had been in the habit of doing.”

One commentator writes, “Now he had in his roof-chamber open windows fronting Jerusalem.” That is, he had built upon his roof an extra room with windows which opened towards Jerusalem, a special prayer room. In this room he communed with God and prayed for his loved nation.

You see Daniel did not need to worry. He had long ago given his life into God’s hands and he could fully trust Him in this trying and perilous time. He had early in his life purposed to serve God and to do His will.

Three times that day were the sneaking spies hiding around his house. Possibly they whispered to each other as they waited—

“The old fellow heard the decree for one of the servants told him all about it.”

“Then perhaps he won’t pray as usual.”

“O yes, he will, for say what you have a mind to, there isn’t a yellow streak in that man.”

“Listen! There he is now, opening the window for the third time today, and hark, I can hear him praying as usual. I’ll say he has some nerve.”

“Come on. Let’s go. We have our evidence and somehow I do not fancy listening to such praying. He talks to his God as if He were a personal friend.”

So saying they stole away in fiendish glee to King Darius.

The chairman of the committee reported thus—

“O king, did you not sign a decree that if any man asked a petition of any god or man excepting you for thirty days he should be cast into the den of lions?”

Darius answered that he had signed such a paper and that it could not be changed according to the law of the Medes and Persians. It seems they had a rule in their nation that any decree signed by the king could not be changed at the will of the king alone.

With what satanic joy they brought the charges—

“That man, Daniel, who is of the children of the captivity of Judah, pays no attention to you or to the decree which you have signed, but prays to his God as usual three times a day.”

I can see the amazement written upon the king’s face. He had been trapped. He saw in a moment what a fool he had made of himself and all because of his proud heart.

He was very sorry and began at once to find a way to deliver Daniel, saying within himself,

“I should have thought of Daniel. I know that he prays to the God of Israel. Why, he is the most worthy and helpful man in my kingdom. I cannot do without him. Throw him to the lions? No!”

All day long and until sundown he made every effort possible to set Daniel free, but the wicked plotters held him mercilessly to the decree.

Finally, exhausted and miserable, he gave up and issued orders for Daniel to be thrown to the hungry beasts.

A den of lions! Was it some kind of a zoo such as we have in our city parks? No, it was probably a den of lions kept by the government for the purpose of killing criminals.

Let us pretend we are standing by the mouth of the den that dreadful evening of Daniel’s experience.

“Who is that man in royal dress?”

“That is King Darius. He is almost beside himself with grief and has come down here for a parting word with his good friend and adviser, Daniel.”

“What’s that angry mob coming down the street, cursing and swearing?”

“Why, they are kicking and abusing an old man. Can it be? Yes, it is our loved friend, Daniel.”

As they near the den, King Darius and all gathered about can hear the roar of the hungry beasts as they lick their chops for the food the open door promises.

But hark, the king is speaking to Daniel:

“O Daniel, your God whom you serve continually, He will deliver you.”

And the next instant Daniel was plunged into the pit and the huge stone thrown across the mouth.

The king sealed it with his own signet and the signet of his lords, that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.

That is, they saw to it that the king did not give Daniel any chance to escape. The king had spoken great words of encouragement to Daniel: **“Your God whom you serve will deliver you.”** And yet, he did what a lot of us do now-a-days. He said the words but he didn’t really believe them for he went back to the palace and could neither eat nor sleep. He would not so much as permit the musicians to play sweet music to comfort him.

Poor Darius was sick of heart and all because of his vain folly. They had set a trap for him and he had foolishly walked into it.

Early in the morning, he said to himself—

“I believe Daniel’s God will deliver him. I’ll go down at once and see for myself.”

Hurrying to the mouth of the den, I think he said to the guard, “Break that signet seal! Throw off the stone cover!”

And then putting his face down to the mouth of the den he wailed in piteous tones, **“O Daniel, servant of the living God, is your God, whom you serve continually, able to deliver you from the lions?”**

And up from the den came a voice full of strength and faithfulness, **“O king, live forever. My God sent His angel and shut the lions’ mouths and they have not hurt me; He knew I had done no wrong to Him nor to you, O king.”**

What joy filled the heart of King Darius! What a relief to know that his good servant was alive and well. It was too good to be true.

By this time the crowds had gathered around and everyone was excited. Some were glad and some were angry, but all were amazed at the miracle the God of Israel had wrought.

I can hear the jubilant voice of the king as he shouts, “Bring him up!”

And they brought him up and looked him all over and found not so much as one scratch upon him because he believed in the true and only God.

I wonder if the king and Daniel had a visit that day. Perhaps the king said, “My loyal friend, I made a foolish decree. It has taught me a lesson. I was proud and lifted up. How sorry I was when I found what it meant to you.

“You know, Daniel, I had a feeling that your God would deliver you but I didn’t sleep a wink all night.”

And I think Daniel answered, “Oh, is that so? Why, I slept fine! One of the lions let me pillow my head on his shaggy mane and we all spent a quiet, restful night.”

“And the king commanded, and they brought those men, which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the lions’ den, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions ate them up before their bodies had a chance to strike the floor of the den.”

The men, their children, and their wives? How terrible! Yes, it was terrible but that was the decree of a heathen king.

As I write this story I have been thinking that it is dangerous to do harm to God’s own loved ones. He says they are as dear to Him as the apple of His eye. Let us be careful in word or deed not to injure in any way one of His children.

“Then King Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end.

**“He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth,
who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.**

“So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus, the Persian.”

Do you see the Hebrew captive kneeling.
At morning, noon and night to pray?
In his chamber he remembers Zion,
Though in exile far away.

Do not fear to tread the fiery furnace
Nor shrink the lions’ den to share;
For the God of Daniel will deliver,
He will send His angels there.

“Children of the living God take courage;
Your great deliverance sweetly sing;
Set your faces towards the hill of Zion,
Thence to hail your coming king.”

Chorus:

Are your windows open towards Jerusalem
Though as captives yet a little while we stay?
For the coming of the King in His glory
Are you watching day by day?

~ end of chapter 7 ~

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