

DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN

(Daniel 6:1-28)

Purpose: To teach God's care for those who dare to take a stand for Him.

When the Medes and the Persians conquered the Babylonian Empire, they extended their dominion over almost all the Old Testament World.

Darius, king of this vast domain, had chosen over a hundred princes to help him in the governing of the people. King Darius had a high regard for the intelligence of other men.

And Daniel, because of his great wisdom, was a favourite of the king. Daniel was given the place of authority over all the other princes. Only the king could tell Daniel what to do.

Because of Daniel's position with the kingdom, the other princes hated him. Jealously made them bitter and they reasoned within their hearts that somehow they must get rid of Daniel.

If Daniel were out of the way, one of them would surely be put in his place.

So the princes started to spy on Daniel. They watched every move that Daniel made. They were hoping their leader would do something wrong so they could run and tell the king.

But Daniel was a good man. Day after day Daniel lived as he felt the Lord would have him live, and the princes were greatly disappointed to find nothing wrong with Daniel's conduct.

Spying on Daniel was proving to be a waste of time. In order to rob this man of his position and authority, the princes knew they must think of a plan...

...a plan that would trick Daniel into disobeying the king! And it wasn't long before the evil men had thought of a plan that would cause Daniel to lose his life.

The princes gathered together outside the palace and asked for permission to appear before the king.

The king was surprised when he heard the request. Such a thing was not at all common. Ordinarily the rulers of the provinces were called together only by a royal decree.

Still, the king was curious. What was it the princes wanted? It must be very important, thought the king, otherwise the princes would never dare to ask for such a thing.

So the king gave them permission to come before him, and the one who had been chosen to speak for the group stepped forward with the usual greeting.

"King Darius, live forever," he said, and then he went on to tell the king that all the princes of the kingdom were anxious that a new law be made as a special honor to their beloved ruler.

No one throughout the entire kingdom was to ask anyone – God or man – for anything for 30 days, unless it be asked of the king. And if anyone broke the law, that person would be thrown in the den of lions.

King Darius was flattered by such a request. It didn't even occur to the king that Daniel might have been left out of the planning, so he signed their decree and made it law.

When Daniel heard about the law, he knew in his heart that this was a trap that had been set for him.

Daniel knew the next time he got on his knees before his open window to ask God for divine guidance and continued blessing, the men who had plotted this thing would report him to the king.

Daniel could have closed his window. He could have drawn his drapes and prayed to God in secret. But Daniel knew that to do such a thing would be cowardly. He also knew that regardless of anything, God's will in his life must be done.

So Daniel continued to pray before his open window just as he had done before.

And this was the moment the princes were waiting for. Daniel was breaking the law! According to the signed decree Daniel would be thrown to the lions!

When the princes went to the king and demanded that Daniel be thrown to the lions, King Darius realized the cruel purpose of their law. This was no law to honor the king. It was an evil plot to get rid of Daniel.

King Darius was very fond of Daniel. He considered Daniel a trustworthy friend and he greatly relied on the judgment of this wise man. But the king was trapped.

According to the law, Daniel must die.

King Darius spent the day searching through the laws hoping to find a way he could save his friend, but the law was clear. Once the king had signed the law, not even the king himself could undo what he had done.

With the setting of the sun, the king was forced to command that Daniel be seized and taken to the place where the lions were kept.

The animals were crazy with hunger and whatever was thrown to them was instantly torn to pieces.

The king told Daniel how sorry he was – how he'd been trapped into doing this thing, and how, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, not even the king could revoke a royal decree.

And then, Daniel was thrown to the lions...

...and a great stone was brought and placed over the hole...

...and the seal of the king was placed on the covering so that no one would dare to remove it.

The king returned to the palace with a very heavy heart.

All night long the king thought about Daniel and wondered if he would ever again hear the voice of his friend. Daniel must have known about the law, and yet Daniel continued to pray. Was it possible that God would save Daniel from the lions?

When the rays of the morning sun told King Darius that his night of despair was over, the king hurriedly dressed himself...

...and he ran to the place where the lions were kept and ordered the stone be taken away.

The stone was removed and the king cried out, *“Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?”*

And the King Darius listened, hoping to hear the voice of his friend. *“O king, live forever.”*

“My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions’ mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before Him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.”

The king was happy to hear the voice of Daniel and he commanded that his friend be taken out of the lions’ den at once.

And he further commanded that the wicked princes – the men who had plotted against Daniel – be thrown to the lions in Daniel’s place.

And then the king signed another law. This law said that all men were to tremble and fear before God. The God of Daniel was the living God, and steadfast forever.

“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.” (Daniel 6:27)