

DANIEL, THE LION-HEARTED

The story of Daniel in the lion's den has to be one of the most captivating stories in my youth. You have all the elements of great drama. It is now almost seventy years since Daniel and the Hebrew children have been carried away into captivity. Daniel is an old, faithful man of God. There is no blight against his morals, no flaw in his character and no misstep in following God with all his heart. There are the bad guys, the underling leaders beneath the king and the weak king given over to an inflated egotism. In the midst of weak leadership and evil-motivated people, Daniel stands alone. He stands pristine and in a spiritual ionosphere far above his enemies and most of his peers. Brave men in history who championed a cause have been called lion-hearted. Not all who have been christened so deserve the title, but Daniel certainly does. His heart of a lion was evidenced in no less than a literal lion's den! Let's consider this Bible story featuring both the famous and infamous. First consider:

I. The Plans Against Daniel

In Daniel 6:1-9, the beginning of our story, we are:

A. Dealing with Envy (Daniel 6:1-4)

Now as an older man Daniel has become the wisest of the wise men. There were one hundred and twenty princes and over them were presidents and he was the chief. He was the appointed leader. These three traits identify Daniel: he had an excellent spirit, he was faithful, and no fault could be found in him. Others did not have the peace in life or the victory amidst all circumstances that Daniel possessed and they were envious. Envy is what brought Satan into his fall when he desired to be above all others (Isaiah 14:13, 14).

B. Dealing with Mob Mentality (Daniel 6:5-7)

People can do wrong all by themselves, but history is replete with wrongdoings and crimes that escalate once the crowd gets involved. The Bible says, *"Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil..."* (Exodus 23:2). Proverbs 1:10-18 gives us the attitude of the crowd. I Corinthians 15:33 warns us that bad company will corrupt one's morals.

C. Dealing with Pride (Daniel 6:8, 9)

It did not take much to get King Darius to join in this wicked plan. They concealed the full plan, which was to get Daniel eliminated. All they needed was to tell the king he was the greatest and he should be worshipped as god for a month. Here are some Bible verses that reveal exactly what God thinks about pride and what pride will sequentially do to you: Proverbs 16:5; Proverbs 29:23; James 4:6; Galatians 6:3; and Proverbs 16:18.

II. The Prayers That Anchored Daniel

In Daniel 6:10 we see Daniel prayed and could not stop praying. Why not?

A. The Root of Prayer

Notice Daniel prayed toward Jerusalem. Jerusalem was home and was where he learned at his mother's knee the truths of Scripture and the power of prayer. II Timothy 3:15 reminds us of the impact of right teaching on a child. Billy Sunday said, "The last thing you can rob from a boy is that which he learned at his mother's knee."

B. The Regimen of Prayer

Daniel prayed three times a day. It was his routine. It was established. David seemed to have a similar custom as we see in Psalm 55:17. Do you have a regimen?

C. The Respect of Prayer

For Daniel, prayer was not optional. He could have gone "under ground," at least for a month, but he would not hide because he was not ashamed of prayer and he was not ashamed of his Lord.

III. The Persecution Activated Toward Daniel

We find in Daniel 6:11-15 that Daniel did not do wrong, even though malicious plans were made against him. We see:

A. Twisted Truth (Daniel 6:11-13)

The officials told a half-truth. It is true that Daniel could not obey the command not to pray, but it was not because he did not regard the king as was reported. Even later after the whole brouhaha was over Daniel told the king, "...before thee, O king, have I done no hurt" (Daniel 6:22b).

B. Trial of Decision (Daniel 6:14, 15)

The king had a decision to make: would he admit he was doing the wrong thing or would he go ahead and allow the wicked conspirators to manipulate him?

C. Torment of Conscience (Daniel 6:16-18)

There was no comfort after the disastrous decision the king made. He couldn't eat and he couldn't sleep.

IV. The Patience Afforded Daniel

Daniel 6:19-23 illustrates patience is granted to:

A. One of Consistent Character (Daniel 6:19, 20)

The king noted that Daniel was a man who served his God continually, not haphazardly.

B. One of Considerate Grace (Daniel 6: 21, 22)

There are not many people who can be persecuted and not become bitter, but Daniel was one of those precious souls in whom there was no guile.

C. One Who Is in Connected Fellowship (Daniel 6:23)

The victory that Daniel was enjoying can be summarized in this statement, "...Because he believed in his God" (Daniel 6:23c). He had the faith that pleases God (Hebrews 11:6).

V. The Power Advocating Daniel

Daniel 6:24-29 gives a sober, but good ending to this story. We are taught:

A. The Outcome of Evil (Daniel 4:24)

We see these were indeed hungry lions. They did not eat Daniel because they had no appetite, they did not do so because their mouths were supernaturally closed.

B. The Obedience to the True and Living God (Daniel 6:25-27)

Instead of Darius being god for a month, he decreed that Jehovah is God forever! Furthermore, He is to be worshipped with fear and trembling.

C. The Overture to Daniel (Daniel 6:28)

Not only did Daniel prosper in the reign of Darius but also in the reign of the next monarch, Cyrus the Persian. This was proving the Scriptures, *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble"* (Psalm 46:1). *"For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly"* (Psalm 84:11).

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in black ink and features a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.