

Daniel: The Lion's Den and the Eighth Amendment

This is one of my all-time favorite Bible stories. I've been hearing it from time-to-time practically my whole life. The modern versions, though, almost always leave out a great deal of the details of the story. The modern versions almost always tell the "what" of the story, but they rarely tell the "why", and they usually don't focus on the "wind-up" of it all, and to me, that's just about the best part.

Daniel, having overcome many obstacles, trials & tribulations in his life had become a President (a Cabinet-Level official) in the kingdom where he lived. He was a very big deal in its government. But he didn't practice his religion the same way the majority of the culture around him did. Daniel was a staunch follower of God. He made no excuses; he took no shortcuts. He did exactly as the Lord guided him in ALL things, whether doing so was popular or not (and it usually was not). Are you beginning to see why I like this guy so much!

Anyway, his colleagues, the other leaders, multitudes of them, became jealous and envious of him, for obvious reasons. They felt extremely threatened by the favor he was constantly receiving from the Lord, as well as from the current ruler, King Darius. And, like so many others before him, King Darius was something of an idiot, though not quite as bad as many before him. It wasn't so much that he worked against the Lord. Darius wanted more than just about anything to be popular and to be liked. And those aspirations made him practically blind to most of the "private agendas" of his officials. He was very easily manipulated, even though he had the brains, and the power, to put-down any improprieties.

Anyway, in order to try to discredit Daniel (and here's the part of the story that's generally always left out), his colleagues decided to run some background and character checks on him. And they found absolutely nothing they could hang their hats on, nothing! Daniel was, and had always been, a stand-up guy!

So next they decided to orchestrate a statutory/ mandatory change in the Spiritual accountability laws of everyone in the kingdom. They lobbied themselves and changed the law such that anyone caught worshiping anyone other than the king, including the one true God, should be put to a gruesome death in the Lion's den. They knew that Daniel worshiped the Lord three times per day, and they designed this trap especially for him.

And incidentally, this may well be the origins from which our own Constitutional law draws one of its mandates (the one prohibiting the enactment of laws designed to target specific individuals or groups).

So, now the king, though he liked and respected Daniel immensely, fell right into the trap of having approved a statute designed to get Daniel killed. And, once he realized what the effect would be from the decree he'd approved, he (the king) couldn't find a way out of it. So he was influenced by his legislators, as well as by his own ignorance, to have Daniel thrown into the Lion's den.

It was a decision he couldn't bear. But what he didn't realize was that the Lord had Daniel covered. There was never anything to worry about. And Daniel knew this.

So here's what happened:

Daniel 6 (MSG)

Daniel in the Lions' Den

¹⁻³ Darius reorganized his kingdom. He appointed one hundred twenty governors to administer all the parts of his realm. Over them were three vice-regents, one of whom was Daniel. The governors reported to the vice-regents, who made sure that everything was in order for the king. But Daniel, brimming with spirit and intelligence, so completely outclassed the other vice-regents and governors that the king decided to put him in charge of the whole kingdom.

⁴⁻⁵ The vice-regents and governors got together to find some old scandal or skeleton in Daniel's life that they could use against him, but they couldn't dig up anything. He was totally exemplary and trustworthy. They could find no evidence of negligence or misconduct. So they finally gave up and said, "We're never going to find anything against this Daniel unless we can cook up something religious."

⁶⁻⁷ The vice-regents and governors conspired together and then went to the king and said, "King Darius, live forever! We've convened your vice-regents, governors, and all your leading officials, and have agreed that the king should issue the following decree:

For the next thirty days no one is to pray to any god or mortal except you, O king. Anyone who disobeys will be thrown into the lions' den.

⁸ "Issue this decree, O king, and make it unconditional, as if written in stone like all the laws of the Medes and the Persians."

⁹ King Darius signed the decree.

¹⁰ When Daniel learned that the decree had been signed and posted, he continued to pray just as he had always done. His house had windows in the upstairs that opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he knelt there in prayer, thanking and praising his God.

¹¹⁻¹² The conspirators came and found him praying, asking God for help. They went straight to the king and reminded him of the royal decree that he had signed. "Did you not," they said, "sign a decree forbidding anyone to pray to any god or man except you for the next thirty days? And anyone caught doing it would be thrown into the lions' den?"

"Absolutely," said the king. "Written in stone, like all the laws of the Medes and Persians."

¹³ Then they said, "Daniel, one of the Jewish exiles, ignores you, O king, and defies your decree. Three times a day he prays."

¹⁴ At this, the king was very upset and tried his best to get Daniel out of the fix he'd put him in. He worked at it the whole day long.

¹⁵ But then the conspirators were back: "Remember, O king, it's the law of the Medes and Persians that the king's decree can never be changed."

¹⁶ The king caved in and ordered Daniel brought and thrown into the lions' den. But he said to Daniel, "Your God, to whom you are so loyal, is going to get you out of this."

¹⁷ A stone slab was placed over the opening of the den. The king sealed the cover with his signet ring and the signet rings of all his nobles, fixing Daniel's fate.

¹⁸ The king then went back to his palace. He refused supper. He couldn't sleep. He spent the night fasting.

¹⁹⁻²⁰ At daybreak the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. As he approached the den, he called out anxiously, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve so loyally, saved you from the lions?"

²¹⁻²² "O king, live forever!" said Daniel. "My God sent his angel, who closed the mouths of the lions so that they would not hurt me. I've been found innocent before God and also before you, O king. I've done nothing to harm you."

²³ When the king heard these words, he was happy. He ordered Daniel taken up out of the den. When he was hauled up, there wasn't a scratch on him. He had trusted his God.

²⁴ Then the king commanded that the conspirators who had informed on Daniel be thrown into the lions' den, along with their wives and children. Before they hit the floor, the lions had them in their jaws, tearing them to pieces.

²⁵⁻²⁷ King Darius published this proclamation to every race, color, and creed on earth:

Peace to you! Abundant peace!

I decree that Daniel's God shall be worshiped and feared in all parts of my kingdom.

He is the living God, world without end. His kingdom never falls.

His rule continues eternally.

He is a savior and rescuer.

He performs astonishing miracles in heaven and on earth.

He saved Daniel from the power of the lions.

²⁸ From then on, Daniel was treated well during the reign of Darius, and also in the following reign of Cyrus the Persian.

At the end of the day, after the smoke had all cleared, and Daniel had been protected and exonerated by the Lord, King Darius had the conspirators, the co-conspirators, and all their family members, all thrown into the Lion's den, and not a one of them made it out alive.

This was very tragic for the family members of the bad guys. But you know, it's very much analogous to the way things work out even in our time for people who do vicious things like that. I would jokingly cite the Eighth Amendment right of having a punishment that fits the crime, but I know this is not an example that should bear the brunt of anyone's jokes, not even mine. So I will refrain, but I trust my point's been made.

But I do pray that we are the Daniels of the new millennium (no matter what anyone may try to do to us, we come out of it without so much as a scratch)!

I hope you have an amazing day!!

- Jack