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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A2348 ~ Daniel in the Lions' Den.

Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.

The story in today's *Bible Adventure* is a very well-known event recorded in the Bible, and many books have been written for children about it. It's called, 'Daniel in the Lion's Den'.

When Belshazzar became co-regent king with his father over all Babylonia in 550 BC, he didn't have much use for top administrator Daniel from Judah, who'd served Babylon's previous kings so faithfully. Yet as God had prophesied through the writing of doom on Belshazzar's palace wall, the night that the Medes and Persians conquered Babylon, under King Cyrus's leadership in 539 BC, Belshazzar was slain.

The new king, who went by the throne name of 'Darius the Mede', was a diligent army general who organised the kingdom into 120 provinces or states and put a high official in charge of each one. King Darius appointed Daniel and two other administrators to supervise these officials and protect the king's interests. Daniel proved himself more capable than all the others and the king planned to make him in charge over the entire empire. But the lesser officials became envious of Daniel, and they were highly offended that an exiled Jewish slave should be placed in power over them. They conspired to discredit Daniel in the eyes of the king so that Daniel would lose his position and then his life.

King Darius felt guilty that he'd put Daniel in such a situation. His own pride at the manner in which his governors had approached him, foolishly made him fail to closely check the implications of the decree that they'd offered him. Flattery is a dangerous tool, for it can manipulate someone into doing what the flatterer wants but not for the person's best interests. The king realised too late that Daniel hadn't agreed with the other 122 leaders who'd presented the petition to the king to be signed. The officials had lied to him. For when the decree was signed, the king had unwittingly signed Daniel's death warrant. Anyone caught praying to any god or man other than the king within the next 30 days, would be thrown into the king's den of lions.

The decree made King Darius out to be as important as god. According to the law of the Medes and Persians, a royal decree put in writing could not be repealed. So even if King Darius discovered the plot, he couldn't have saved Daniel's life. For everyone knew how close to Almighty God that Daniel was, and that Daniel would never forsake Him.

After Daniel had been cast into the lions' den, the king spent a sleepless night. He couldn't eat and remained fretting over his big mistake, anxiously waiting for the dawn of the new day before he could rush back to the lions' den to see if Daniel's God had protected him during the night.

At daybreak, King Darius hurried to the lions' pit, removed the cover and called out Daniel's name, asking if Daniel's God had saved his life. The king was overjoyed to hear him reply back. Daniel told the king that God had sent an angel to shut the mouths of the lions so that they couldn't hurt him. When Daniel was pulled up out of the pit, all saw that he was completely unharmed.

King Darius then ordered all the officials who had plotted Daniel's murder be thrown to the lions themselves. In contrast to Daniel, as the men were thrown in, the lions jumped up and killed them before they'd even had reached the bottom of the pit. This showed that the lions really were starving hungry and it proved that God had protected and saved Daniel.

The law of the Medes and Persians also decreed that those men's wives and children were to be killed with them, even though the family members may have been innocent. In Deuteronomy, Chapter 24, God tells His Israelite people of the following instruction not to do the same as the pagans. He says: "Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own sin."

After this terrible but victorious event, King Darius sent a letter to all the people in his kingdom about Daniel's God, saying that Daniel's God had delivered him from the power of the lions. It's not known that Darius' decree brought anyone into full reverence and fear of Almighty God, as the reason is simply that faith cannot be commanded. But Daniel's faith surely caused faith to arise in others, and particularly those of the Jewish exiles in Babylon. So, it is with us: when people see our faith in action, they'll be encouraged to have faith in God themselves and will praise our Heavenly Father for His answers to prayer.

This event is recorded in Chapter 6 of the Bible book of Daniel, by Daniel himself when he was around 80 years of age. Although Daniel had been living by faith in his God for many years, the life of faith in God must be lived to the very end. Earlier victories and rescues by God cannot be taken as a guarantee that in the future, no crisis will arise again. Daniel's life was summed up in the phrase about his relationship with God – in the king's words: "whom you serve continually."

What can we learn from this miraculous deliverance? When the royal decree was signed, Daniel had a decision to make: he had to choose between his loyalty to the king or his loyalty to His God. Knowing that Daniel consistently prayed to God three times a day with his windows open towards Jerusalem, the other administrators plotted to catch him out by the decree. Daniel could have compromised by keeping his windows shut or waiting until after dark to have his prayers. But Daniel went right on doing what he'd always done. His plotters knew that he would do so, because Daniel had proven that he was a person of integrity.

What is integrity? It's the quality of being consistently honest and a person living by strong moral principles. Most people live in four different worlds. Firstly, we all live part of our lives in our own *private world*, where no one can enter. Not even closest friends or family can know our secret and private thoughts. However, nothing is ever hidden from God, even in our thinking. That's why no one can fool God by pretending to be a different person in public.

Secondly, each person lives part of their lives in a *personal world*, surrounded by a small circle of family members and maybe a few good friends. These people know what we're really like behind closed doors. Then thirdly, there's our *working world*, where there might be a few hundred people who know who we are and what we do. We interact every day with them on the job.

Fourthly, we live in a *public world*, which is our widest area of influence. It is here where people form public opinions of us, whether they're good or bad. In this group, there are people who may not know us in our working life or personally, but when they hear our name mentioned, they have an opinion about us. And the same was true for Daniel in the court of King Darius. Sadly though, it seems that many people in our modern culture live with very little integrity and are following the path of compromise, in the mistaken belief that this is the best way forward in life for them to live.

How do you think about yourself? Are you just a body that happens to have a spirit-soul within you? Many people today are primarily body conscious; we spend most of our time consumed with our bodies' looks and needs. But we have to face the fact sooner or later our bodies are simply the house that we reside in as we journey through this world. The real you is your spirit; that part of you that's alive within your body and will still be alive long after your body has gone back to dust.

For most of his life, Daniel prayed three times a day to his God. He never waited until a crisis or a time of distress seemed to be going against him. In his book of Daniel, we see miracles that God did in saving Daniel's friends from the furnace and now, for Daniel himself by an angel protecting him in the lions' den. God revealed His power at that point so that people would know that He was the God of the universe. His future kingdom will one day replace all other kingdoms on the earth. Christians can be confident that even if their bodies are destroyed in this life, they will have a life in God's kingdom of paradise beyond this one.

Christians today should take note of Daniel's example. Our tendency to compromise for convenience' sake weakens us spiritually and endangers our fellowship with God. We need to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit; but we mustn't invite unnecessary danger or look for trouble that God hasn't sent. It's not wrong to avoid trouble, but avoiding it must be done with a clear conscience and without sinning. If the Holy Spirit gives us the sense that we are compromising our faith in our God, then we must follow Daniel's example and place the outcome in God's hands, whatever that may be.

Daniel trusted God, no matter the consequences to himself. But he gained a place among the heroes of the faith listed in Hebrews, Chapter 11. In times of testing, are our spirits full of integrity and under the leading of God's Holy Spirit? If unsure of this, repent of what you fear and are afraid of about the future, and stop sinning by trying to protect yourself by not fully trusting in God's promises to you. Have no fear: God is faithful, and rewards those who fear Him. He promises to never leave you or forsake you, no matter what the situation you have to face.

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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