

## “DARE TO BE A DARIUS”

Based on Daniel 6

*Theme of Vacation Bible School*

It was almost too good to be true. Daniel, the perfect servant for the Lord. Diligent, dedicated, faithful to prayer, not easily moved. Even in the face of certain death, he did not waffle. For the believer, a role model to raise before you; a reminder: at all times, and in all circumstances, ‘stand strong’, ‘believe in yourself,’ and ‘trust God.’ As I said, for someone having faith, a perfect role model. For a skittish seeker of the faith, perhaps not so good. Daniel appeared to be just too perfect. Darius, on the other hand, was a little more believable! King Darius was not so perfect, his ego tainted his thinking, he listened to the whispers of vanity, and enjoyed the privilege of casting authority on a whim. His conscious was blinded by these things, and for a time, clouded his judgment. Now that sounds a little bit more like real life to me!

So let’s begin our story. In the ancient world, it was common for a king who conquered, to take the best. The best of the land became food for the table. The best of the treasure found it’s way to the palace. The best of the people became slaves. The kings of Darius’ time in

history were great builders. Many of the wondrous archeological finds of the Middle East today, are the legacies of this time of history. But large building projects required much money from the treasury, many slaves to work, and much food to feed them. Hence, all the raided goods from the last conquest!

Over time, the king would discover a few slaves, who were very skilled: artisans, musicians, bankers, administrators. The king would place them in charge of their own people. These few individuals would spend more time in and near the palace, entertaining the king and his court, or reporting to palace officials on the progress of the building projects. Daniel was one of these men, as were his cohorts, Shadrach, Meshach and Abendigo, whom you also may remember from Sunday School days.

Daniel became recognized for being a diligent, and honest man, a speaker of the truth. It would appear that over time, Daniel not only advised the king, but became a personal friend of the king. That is when the trouble began, and jealousy reared its ugly head. Others in the palace did not like this

‘preferred’ status of Daniel. He was, after all, still a slave. And so a scheme unfolded. The king’s ego was stroked carefully, and with slight of hand, a binding decree was put in place that would jeopardize the life of his friend. The wax had barely cooled on the sealed parchment when the king realized his mistake. But it was too late.

The decree could not be changed.

Daniel would not stop praying.

The den of lions had a new visitor that evening.

King Darius agonized all night, scripture tells us, nightmares before him every time he closed his eyes. He realized he had been duped. He realized the power he held as king had been used against him. He realized that love and affection for another had little to do with race, or status, it had to do with character. He realized that he would have to live with his mistake. He realized that a little more thought and care to the whole situation could have avoided this most difficult and guilt wrenching place he now found himself. If only he could turn back time. I think, that somewhere in the depths of that most black night, Darius fell to

his knees and began to pray; to a God he did not know; to a God he did not understand; but to a God he knew his friend Daniel always turned to in difficult moments.

Of course, in perfect Sunday School style, the story ends on a high note. As the morning rays of sun blink onto the horizon, King Darius raced to the prison, and found to his amazement, Daniel in one piece, praying. A miracle. Darius fell to his knees in front of Daniel and begged forgiveness. When the wave of emotion had passed, he decreed to his people:

*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.*  
(v25-27)

Ah, if real life were only that simple. Sometimes, there isn't an opportunity to 'fix' the problem you created. Sometimes there isn't the chance to ask forgiveness. But there is always the opportunity to change your ways, change direction, change thinking. It isn't easy, but it is possible. And after the first wrench of 'old habits' clashing with 'new thinking' has warred its battle within your heart, there is a peace that settles in, where distrust and anxiety lived before. King Darius discovered it as well. Notice what he said before he issued his new decree:  
*Peace to you! Abundant peace!*  
(v25).

A greeting to his people yes. But also the relief of a man who has found his heart again. Peace. Abundant peace.

Friends, sometimes life is not neat and tidy. Sometimes, the battles within must be warred, so that there is space for the peace. Too many times, we avoid the inner battles, because they are hard work, they are emotional, and they can be tearful. But don't be like King Darius, and waffle with worldly thinking and vanity. Be like Daniel. Fall to your knees, or your lounge chair, or your bedside, or your pew, and pray. 'Stand strong' in your faith, and when the lions of life begin to circle around you, 'trust God.'

Dare to be a Daniel!

Dare to stand alone!

Dare to have a purpose firm!

Dare to make it known!

~Philip Bliss