

Stand Strong

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[0 : 0 0] So King Darius, where's King Darius? King Darius, can you come stand over this side of the platform over here? Lovely, thank you. Daniel, Daniel, do you want to come and stand over here?

Administrators, do you want to stand here? Okay, just stand in the middle for a second. Okay, and Daniel was doing such a good job alongside a couple of other particular administrators in running the kingdom on behalf of Darius, that he decided to put Daniel in charge of all of them.

Because Daniel was doing such a good job, and no one could fault him in what he did, which may not sound like most of the administrators we have in this country at the moment, but I'm sure lots of them are trying their best. But Daniel was above reproach and doing a good job, and presumably he was caring for the other administrators in a good way. But, as they so often the case, they got a bit jealous. And they went to King Darius and started whispering and muttering in his ear, because they were jealous of Daniel. And they said, why don't you have a decree that says everyone must bow down and worship you for the next 30 days?

And anyone who doesn't, why don't you punish them by putting them in the lion's den? And King Darius listened to those administrators, and even though he knew Daniel was a good guy, that didn't really enter his thoughts at the time. So he nodded his head and said, yeah, seems like a good idea to me. And so the decree went out that for the next 30 days, people should only bow down to Darius and worship him only and their gods.

Daniel worshipped the one true God, Jehovah. And it was his practice to do that three times a day, every day, every day, from when he was first taken to Babylon, which you may not look it, but he's now 70 years old. And he heard the decree that he should bow down only to Darius, but he ignored it because he knew that he should still worship God. So three times a day, he knelt down at his window, and he worshipped the one true God. And the administrators, who knew this was going to happen, burst in on him. They burst in on him.

[3 : 0 6] And then they went back to Darius and said, we caught Daniel worshipping a different God.

He must go in the lion's den. But because I have made a decree that cannot be broken, though I don't want to, but to follow the law, I must throw him in the lion's den.

So the administrators took Daniel and threw him in to the lion's den. And did you hear what they said? They were encouraging the lions to eat up Daniel. Thank you, administrators. King Darius.

King Darius had a bad night because he knew that he had been tricked and that he shouldn't have allowed himself to be put in a position where he had to throw a trusted advisor into the lion's den.

After a sleepless night, the following morning, he went to the lion's den. He rolled or probably got some people on his behalf to pull back the stone.

[4 : 2 1] And amazingly, there was Daniel still alive and well. Risk backing this up with a children's short song version, just to remind us of the story.

Do notice that in this video, it's not technically correct because it shows a young Daniel, when Daniel was actually 70 at the time of this story.

So let's just listen to this song as a reminder of the story in a different way for those who liked the music and the visual way of learning things. In a second, Tim's going to show a picture, but not just yet, which at the time was considered quite frightening.

And I got told off for showing it because it scared some people in my family. I was talking about anniversaries earlier on, and there is a link, probably if I remember, at the end of the talk about Daniel, to the fact that today is a fourth year anniversary for me, to the day.

Now, who can remember? Anybody? We all did it religiously, didn't we? Yes. Someone nodding. So four years ago to the day, I posted this picture and scared the living daylights out of my family, who thought that I had been admitted with COVID to Kings.

[6 : 00] This was actually from the A&E; department, and I was, a few hours later, sent home. We'll come back to that later. Before going on to the actual talk, I just want to say a thank you to those who, while I was incarcerated in my bedroom with COVID, supported Liz especially, but also prayed for me and for her and for Lauda at the time who was with us.

For those who rang and talked to me on the telephone during that time, because that was a real blessing. For those who did more than just talk and sent videos and mathematical challenges, that in my state of mind at the time were quite a challenge, even though they were primary school level.

So thank you especially to those who supported us four years ago, because it was a church family at work. Right.

Before I get emotional myself, let's go to the next slide. It may have looked something like this. Probably more than one. Definitely fearsome. This one wouldn't show its teeth, but it probably has sharp teeth as well.

So Daniel in the lion's den. Thank you. Thank you. Who were the main people in this story? Okay, so we've seen the story acted out.

[7 : 20] There was King Darius, who was the supreme ruler, whose word was unchangeable law. There was Daniel, who was a dedicated follower of the one true God. The administrators and satraps, which is really another word for governors, old-fashioned word for governors, who were jealous of Daniel.

King Darius, as we know, was so impressed with Daniel and all that he did and the way he did it that he planned to put him in complete charge over all the other administrators.

The other administrators were jealous, and even though Daniel was perfect in his conduct, they wanted him disgraced and discharged from his duties. King Darius listened to those plotting against Daniel, even though he considered Daniel better than them.

When Daniel defied the decree and continued, it's not he started to, he continued something that he had already been doing for a long time to worship God.

King Darius stuck to the law he had made and threw Daniel into the lion's den. I think Tim is controlling this and not me.

[8 : 45] This is probably a good idea, actually. King Darius regretted what he had allowed himself to be forced to do. God sent an angel and closed up the mouths of the lions, some supernatural intervention.

The men who tricked the king into punishing Daniel were thrown into the lion's den instead. Okay, so that is the story.

King Darius sent out a decree to the whole kingdom. The decree said, I'm sorry, ooh, I missed a few steps. Can you go back for a second?

Okay, so before, sorry, go back one more slide, Tim. Sorry, thank you. The men who tricked the king into punishing Daniel were thrown into the lion's den instead.

King Darius, then, was so impressed with Daniel and the fact that Daniel's god had saved him and had acted supernaturally, that then he sent out a decree to the whole kingdom, saying, for he, that is Jehovah, Daniel's god, is the living god, not a statue of gold, not a man, and he endures forever.

[10 : 08] His kingdom will not be destroyed. His dominion will never end. He rescues and he saves. He performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth.

He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions. Next slide, please. So just a few pointers. If you are in a position of trust or authority, who are you listening to for advice?

And that can be both in your secular life and work, can be in your spiritual life and work, can be in leadership, can be in leadership of the church.

Who are the voices you're listening to? Are you listening to the voices of those who are godly or those who are ungodly? Are you listening to the voices of those who have their own agenda or secret agenda or are plotting against someone else to bring them down?

Or are you listening to wise counsel? Think. Once you've heard that advice, think about it before embarking on a course of action which cannot be changed.

[11 : 26] King Darius made a decree and we're told in the Bible that the law of the Medes, and King Darius was a Mede, and the Persians, once written, could not be changed.

If you like, it became legalistic. And again, is there something that you are doing, whether in your life or in your workplace or in your relationships with other people or your relationship with God, that has become legalistic?

You're doing it because, well, I'm going to do it because I think it's the right thing to do and I'm always going to do it regardless of the effect it might have on other people, the effect it might have on me.

Will doing it bring glory to God or will sticking in the same habit actually become negative in your life or on others? Daniel was considered, well, not necessarily perfect, but he was a good administrator with good conduct.

And the others looked at him and became jealous because of his relationship with Darius, possibly, because of the influence he was able to have through his good conduct. And instead of thinking, let's become as good as him, they said, let's bring him down below us.

[12 : 46] When you see people around you who seem to be being blessed by God or blessed in their life, are you thinking, God, what must I do to be blessed like that?

Or are you thinking, what can I do to spoil it? What might upset them? I'm sure none of us actually think specifically like that. We might end up behaving in ways which take the shine off someone else's blessing, someone else's glory.

Next slide. Okay. When a time of testing comes, Daniel had entered a time of testing. Be in a position to trust in your normal practice and continue doing it.

Daniel didn't have to start, didn't start doing something different. He didn't hide himself away. He still trusted in his normal practice. Even though he knew that his normal practice might get him into trouble, he carried on because he knew that the God that he worshipped was greater than the rulers of the kingdom.

that he who had control of the soul and the spirit was greater than he who can destroy the body, if you like. And even when you're doing everything well, like Daniel was, even when you're doing things to the best of your ability and your ability is the best, there are others who will seek to bring you down.

[14 : 16] Keep your trust in God. Is there another? It might be the last slide. Is that the last slide? It is the last slide. So back to my anniversary.

I was incarcerated not in a lion's den, but in an enclosed space that I was not allowed out of for, I think, eight, you don't have to keep showing the picture, Tim.

Eight, nine, ten, about ten, eleven days. Or was it two weeks at the time you had to be avoiding other people? Liz drew up a worship list on Spotify for me that I could listen to daily.

I could use the internet and a tablet to be in contact with family.

On my father's birthday four years ago, the whole family met up on a Zoom call. That was his 94th birthday. I was able to be in contact with home group.

[15 : 26] I was kept uplifted by contact with brothers and sisters in Christ.

So if you find yourself being a bit isolated, not necessarily physically isolated, but maybe emotionally isolated, surrounded by people who are not Christians, people who don't have your best at heart, people who are only looking out for themselves and don't care about you.

God, as he provided an angel for Daniel, will provide the care and support you need, whether through the power of the Holy Spirit or the power of the love of your brothers and sisters, your family in Christ.

God bless you.