

Marilyn Hickey: Angels Shut Lions' Mouths

Angels are sent to believers to take care of the lions in their lives.

The devil pretends he is a lion. He has a big mouth and he walks around roaring and looking for meaty Christians to devour (1 Pet. 5:8-9). But angels know how to shut lions' mouths.

The Old Testament prophet Daniel discovered an angel's power over lions in a dramatic way one day.

Daniel was not a young man when he encountered lions. He was probably more than 80 years of age, however, he had learned to handle lions long before he had his personal encounter with them.

In James 4:7 we are told to resist a lion (Satan) by standing in faith. Daniel had learned how to pray God's Word. From the first day of his captivity he purposed in his heart to stand uncompromisingly on God's Word. We never find him praying problems; only promises and thereby only receiving provisions. He had learned how to resist a lion. He stood fast in the Word; however, his praying didn't keep him out of the lions' den. His praying put him in the lions' den.

Daniel had a very important position in the Persian empire. He was one of three presidents who were second only to the king. He had power, wealth and favor. The Bible says he was promoted because he had an excellent spirit. This aroused envy in the other rulers and they looked for ways to destroy Daniel.

They found Daniel to be faithful with no evil in him, but they did discover one "glaring error" in him. He prayed too much. He had a disciplined time for prayer three times a day. Being

more than 80 didn't keep him from bowing his knees. It was no secret because he opened his window and prayed toward Jerusalem three times a day.

David, who also fought lions, prayed three times a day (Ps. 55:17).

The presidents devised a plan they felt would please the king and remove Daniel from power. They came to Darius to persuade him to pass a decree that no prayer should be made to anyone but the king for 30 days.

The decree appealed to the king, for it made him a deity. And once a decree was passed, it could not be revoked, even by the king himself.

Daniel did not have to get ready to face the lions, he stayed ready. His prayer life is shown throughout the book.

He prayed privately in Daniel 6:10: "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house. And his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled on his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously."

He prayed earnestly in Daniel 9:3: "I set my face toward the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplications with fasting and sackcloth and ashes."

He prayed desperately in Daniel 10:2-3: "In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. I ate no tasty food, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all until three whole weeks were fulfilled."

He prayed powerfully in Daniel 10:12: "Then he said to me, 'Do not be afraid, Daniel. For from the first day that you set your heart to understand this and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come because of your words'."

When the king was brought the news concerning Daniel's prayer life, he saw the neatly planned trap and became disgusted with himself. The king spent the night worrying while Daniel was in the lion's den. Daniel did not. He was prepared.

Early the next morning, the king called to Daniel and to his surprise and joy the strong voice of Daniel answered: "My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths." Daniel hadn't been scratched in his ordeal with the lions.

Darius was so impressed he published a decree proclaiming the greatness of Daniel's God. He declared:

1. God is living.
2. His kingdom is eternal.
3. His dominion is unto the end.
4. He delivers and rescues.
5. He works signs and wonders.
6. He sent an angel and delivered Daniel from the lions' den.

The story opened telling of Daniel's prosperity and closed with Daniel's prosperity. What made him prosper? Very simply, it was faith. Faith in God's Word. Angels move to our aid when we move in God's Word.

You may have an overnight stay in a lions' den sometime. Let me give you some advice on how to cope with lions.

1. Read your Bible before you arrive in the lions' den.
2. Have a disciplined prayer time before lions are sniffing at your clothes.
3. Give God the glory for your angelic deliverance.
4. Pray for those watching you in the lions' den.
5. Keep an excellent spirit.
6. Know the Bible will work for you.
7. Decide you are a success.
8. Look to God.
9. Keep your focus on the Word in a crisis..

Daniel didn't try to get the king to help him; he appealed to the King of kings. It is the King of kings who dispatches angels to your rescue.

Because of his faith, Daniel receives an honorable mention in Hebrews 11:33, "who through faith subdued kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions." Daniel means "God is my judge." Put your trust in a righteous God who is Judge of all and He will send His angel to stop the mouth of lions.

One cold, snowy night several winters ago I also had an experience with that old pretender lion the devil and my angel.

I fixed dinner for my family and looked forward to a relaxing evening at home alone with only our black toy poodle, Beethoven. My husband and son had left to take an oil painting lesson and my daughter had gone to her piano lesson. It was so rare to have such a night at home alone, I thought I would savor every moment of it. I had been wanting to try a new cake recipe and what better time could I have?

I took the newspaper clipping out of my recipe file and began to get out all the ingredients. Running up the stairs to our bedroom to find an apron, I heard the ring of the bedroom phone interrupting the warm silence I had been enjoying. Hastily I picked up the phone wondering who would be calling on my solitary night which I had so relished. Answering questions in rapid-fire yeses and noes, I waited impatiently for the opportunity to say good-bye.

After 10 or 15 minutes, I hung up and hurriedly walked down the steps to continue my cake baking: While I had been talking on the phone I had kicked off my shoes and I remembered that as I walked down the steps in my stocking feet. But, impatient to get at my cake baking, I decided to leave my shoes in the bedroom.

As I walked into the kitchen, a cold wind hit my feet and the reason became obvious when I saw our back door wide open. My first thought was "which one of my children has left the door open?" and yet I knew in my heart that no one in our family would have left the door open on such a cold; wintry night.

Before I could react, Beethoven went over to our black, wrought iron fence which separates our family room from our kitchen.

The family room was dark but our little poodle was aware of more darkness than merely the absence of light. He let out a low, throaty growl. Every little black curly hair on his body seemed to be standing at attention. He was alert and ready to jump through the wrought iron railing.

There was no question in his mind that there was an intruder someplace in the darkness of that room. By now, there was no question in my mind either that there was an uninvited guest and perhaps a dangerous one. I didn't know whether I should scream, run out the back door, or go into that dark family room and chase out the intruder.

As these thoughts raced through my mind, it was as though someone took my arm and guided me to close and lock the back door. A calmness which is really beyond description filled my spirit, my mind and even my body. Every movement I made seemed effortless, as though it had already been planned, and I was simply walking in steps placed before me.

I picked up our tiny poodle and walked out the front door. When my stockinged feet touched the cold concrete of our front porch, I suddenly wished that I had gone back up those stairs and put on my shoes. I walked rapidly down the front steps and then ran across the lawn to our neighbor's house to the west of us.

As I stood shivering on their front porch, waiting for them to answer the door bell, I probed in my mind trying to imagine

who the frightening, mysterious intruder might be. I could feel the warmth of Beethoven's furry body in my arms and it seemed the only spot of warmth on the whole body. Even my mind seemed to be cold.

At last, my neighbor came to the door. He looked at me as though I had lost my mind—no shoes, no coat and holding a dog. Before he could open his mouth, I opened mine. The words flew out of my mouth, "There's someone in my house, hiding. They came in the back door. Would you please come over to my house with me?"

I waited with my feet almost numb with cold as he grabbed a jacket and a flashlight. The two of us cut across his lawn. I noticed the moon and for a second it seemed like a normal cold Colorado night. Because of the moon light, we could easily see the figure that erupted out of my front door, running in long strides and jumping into a car parked not too far from the front of our house.

Though I could tell the figure was tall, maybe 5'10" or 5'11", I was not sure it was a male. Much of the movement was like a woman. I felt a sickening feeling in my stomach as I realized that I could easily identify my unwelcome intruder.

She was a large woman with many mental problems our church pastor had counseled. We had all seen some extremely hostile reactions. Three of us had encouraged her to go to a Christian counseling service but she had refused. She had also refused psychiatric help.

Why had she waited until my family was gone? Why had she hidden in some dark corner of our family room? What did she want? What were her intentions?

I cannot give you secure answers to these questions, but I do know this: My guardian angel was very busy that night. I believe he took my arm and guided me and calmed me in those first moments of panic. My guardian angel is my friend.

When my husband came home with my daughter and son, they walked in the front door to the delicious aroma of freshly baked pound cake. My husband said, "Why is every light in the house on?" My neighbor had insisted on going through every room and closet in the house and turning on all the lights. He had also insisted we call the police but I didn't tell my husband until after cake and coffee.

It was then I could honestly say that I believed the rescue squad of heaven, God's angels, had come to my aid. "The angel of the Lord camps around those who fear Him, and delivers them" (Ps. 34:7)