

# Session 37

## DANIEL IN THE FACE OF OPPOSITION

*Daniel 6:1-23*

### Memory Verse

*Then Daniel spoke with the king: “May the king live forever. My God sent his angel and shut the lions’ mouths; and they haven’t harmed me, for I was found innocent before him. And also before you, Your Majesty, I have not done harm.”*

– DANIEL 6:21-22, CSB



## Daniel in the Face of Opposition

**THEOLOGICAL THEME:** God's people are to obey and trust Him in all circumstances, even when it goes against the prevailing culture. Living for God will always draw opposition and possible negative consequences, but He is always faithful.

**CALL TO ACTION:** When opposition arises, what is your first reaction? Who do you go to? Who you go to matters.

When people think of their favorite children's Bible stories, Daniel and the Lion's Den is often included. There are some great points from this account that kids can understand and apply, but the reality is that what Daniel faced was brutal and life threatening. This was a result of his choice to live a godly life regardless of his circumstances or the difficulties of living in a foreign land as an exile. Daniel is a great example of what it means to trust and obey God. The application for adults to be found in this lesson is beyond that of what a children's story may tell and deserves our attention in every detail.

 What are some of your favorite children's Bible stories?

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 What are the main points from Daniel and the Lion's Den that you remember as a child?

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## Session Summary

In the face of opposition to God, the best response is to pray like Daniel. It is easy to compromise the truth when we are threatened. By all reason, Daniel faced a punishment of certain death if he chose to continue his habit of praying three times a day in plain sight. But instead of cowering in fear, Daniel continued faithfully in prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord.

God used this situation to show His glory and reinforce Daniel's faithful witness. The king recognized Daniel's faith and even expressed his own hope in the God of Daniel when there was nothing even the king could do to save Daniel. God is still the only hope for the world, and those who trust in Him are equipped to stand firm in Him no matter the opposition.

### 1. The Plot (Daniel 6:1-9)

Once again, as throughout his time in exile, Daniel distinguished himself as man of character and resolve and was given a position of honor and power by the king. As one of three leaders directly under Darius, Daniel was described as having an extraordinary spirit. The power given to him and that he was so highly regarded bothered his contemporaries and made him the subject for attack. But Daniel lived in such a way that his enemies could find nothing in his character or actions to bring against him. This doesn't mean he was without sin but that he lived an upright life full of integrity and blameless in his behavior.



Is it possible for us to live the way Daniel did? Why or why not?

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When godly people are distinguished and elevated, it will bring opposition. Those who live by worldly standards will take notice and feel threatened. When Daniel was given a position of power and distinction, the ungodly plotted how they could have him removed from power. It is no surprise that the world comes after those who stand for the Lord and live by His standards. Jealousy is a powerful motivator and caused the men to start conniving. Yet, they had trouble finding anything to bring out about Daniel that would hurt him in any way.

**?** What would it look like for us to live in a way that people have trouble finding anything against us? What would this mean about the way we handle the times we do sin?

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Daniel had lived a life of such integrity that there were no skeletons in his closets and the men knew they wouldn't be able to entrap him in sin. Consider whether someone could say the same about you and what that kind of life says about the Lord. In their scheming against Daniel, the men finally concluded that the only way they could catch him doing something "wrong" was to make a law prohibiting worship of God. In that area he was unwavering and steadfast.

The men came up with a convincing argument that appealed to Darius's ego and the trap was laid. To ensure their plan worked, these men sought a type of law that couldn't be changed. They had the foresight to recognize the affection Darius had for Daniel and that he might seek to protect Daniel after realizing the implications of the ruling.

**?** Application: What needs to change in your life so that others might have trouble charging you with a lack of integrity?

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## 2. The Stand (Daniel 6:10-15)

Though Daniel submitted to the authority of the land and respected those in power, he was loyal to God above all. When the decree was signed, Daniel continued his practices of worship. He didn't pray more or less; he simply continued the disciplines already established in his life. Daniel refused to compromise his faith in any way, just as he had when faced with the food in Daniel chapter 1. He showed more allegiance to the Lord than any earthly ruler. Daniel shows us what it looks like to love God above all else.

Daniel's custom was to pray in his upper room, in front of his windows toward Jerusalem, three times a day. Faced with an option to give up his customary prayer time or be thrown into a den of lions, he chose to obey God rather than

men. Daniel did not fear the civil consequences of his disobedience but trusted God's ability to provide for him or bring him home to heaven.

**?** What does this tell you about the importance of having regularly spiritual disciplines as a foundational habit of your life? Why is that important, even in seasons that are free from distress?

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The men knew they would find Daniel praying because of his past record of faithfulness. Although they portrayed Daniel's prayer life as disrespectful to the king, nothing could be further from the truth. Daniel had repeatedly shown respect to the ruler while also submitting to God as his ultimate authority. Faced with the option of giving up his faithful practice to save himself, Daniel trusted God no matter what.

Once the men caught Daniel breaking this new decree, the king was distressed at their report. Darius had been used in the plot against Daniel and nothing could be changed about the decree. His foolish decision to listen to the enemies of Daniel and give in to his pride came back to haunt him as he faced the loss of his trusted leader. We too must be careful about making bold decisions based on wrong motives that will have undesired consequences.

**?** Darius let his pride blind him to what the men were really doing. When was a time you were tempted to let your ego get in the way of faithfulness to God?

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**?** Application: What is an area where you might be tempted to change how you act or speak to please men rather than God? How can you rely on God to stand firm in those moments?

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### 3. The Result (Daniel 6:16-23)

With no other recourse, the king had to throw Daniel into the lion's den as decreed. It is obvious that Daniel's example had a great influence on the king. Darius recognized the faith that caused Daniel to live differently and showed respect for Daniel's God. Even Darius realized it was up to God to deliver Daniel. Then the king sealed the den of lions, and Daniel was left to his fate.

After a sleepless night of fasting, Darius rushed to check on Daniel. Note his address of Daniel when he arrived. In this crisis, the Lord whom Daniel served was front and center in Darius's mind. Daniel answered and assured Darius that God had indeed saved him from certain death. Daniel stood firm that he had done no wrong before the king, even as his obedience to God had defied the decree.



**What did Daniel's obedience show about God that the king and others might not have witnessed had Daniel compromised to obey the law?**

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Daniel reminds us that sometimes believers will be unjustly accused and even persecuted, but God is more powerful than anything the world brings against us. The Lord demonstrated once again that He can deliver His people from any circumstance. Things may not happen in the way we expect, but God's plans are always for our good and for His glory. Had Daniel not gone into the lion's den, Darius may not have witnessed God's undeniable power and faithfulness to His people. Because Daniel obeyed God, the name of the Lord was spread far and wide.




**How was Daniel's situation used for His good? How was it used for God's glory?**

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When the morning came and Daniel was not harmed, he made clear that his salvation had been from the Lord. Consider the words Daniel spoke about what happened that night with the lions. He gave respect to the king and then declared emphatically it was the Lord who saved him.

The king was not only thrilled Daniel was saved, but he also punished the ones who had plotted against him. He commanded that those who had set up Daniel with the decree were to be thrown into the den of lions. This reminds us that God's justice always reigns, whether in this life or the one to come. The fact that the lions immediately devoured those thrown into the pit also refutes any argument that Daniel was not eaten because of some natural cause. God alone protected Daniel, and God alone deserved the glory.

 **Application: What is your primary takeaway from this account that you might have missed hearing it as a child?**

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## Conclusion

We can draw much application from Daniel's life. In the face of calamity, we can trust in the Lord and have peace. Although Daniel had found favor with the King during his exile in Babylon, others became jealous and plotted against him. Still, Daniel refused to compromise his faith and stayed loyal to the one true God.

Those who wanted to bring about Daniel's downfall couldn't find anything to accuse him of, so they attacked his faith. Knowing his commitment to his prayer life, they conspired to design a decree condemning anyone who prayed in this way to the lion's den. When the world comes after our faith, we can be like Daniel and continue to seek and obey the Lord. Daniel did not waiver despite the punishment he faced.

All the turmoil he faced did not change the way Daniel lived, but it did change others. We too are to live in a way that influences those around us toward faith in the Lord.

❓ Where do you need to develop further spiritual disciplines as a means of drawing near to God every day?

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❓ How can we as a group encourage one another toward faithfulness to God over the world?

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❓ How can you seek a gospel conversation with someone by sharing the story of Daniel and the lions?

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## Memorize

*Then Daniel spoke with the king: “May the king live forever. My God sent his angel and shut the lions’ mouths; and they haven’t harmed me, for I was found innocent before him. And also before you, Your Majesty, I have not done harm.”*

- Daniel 6:21-22, CSB