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**Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York**

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**Babylon or Jerusalem?**

**Daniel 1:3-4**

Before with open up in prayer, I just want to have a couple -- say a couple of words about the news about Saeed Abedini. I think most of you know that he was released. As far as I know I think he's still on Iranian soil but he's in an embassy -- he's out now?

Okay. Great. What I wanted to say about that is there's an extent to which all of us in this room own that. And we never would have owned that if he was not someone that we've been praying for for literally years. And this is what happens. When you start to pray for people, you start to take much more of an interest in them than just an idea, oh, well, I mean, there was four others that were released, I'm glad they were released but I don't -- I'm not emotionally tied to those others. I'm emotionally tied to Saeed. And that's one of the things that happens when you begin to pray. And so I just want to say one of the reasons why Saeed has been released is because of what we as a congregation have been doing and congregations all throughout this country and throughout the world. God has his sovereign plans. He's going to do what he's going to do but he involves us in that purpose. And he involves us

in that purpose and when we participate with him, we become caught up in that and so in a very real sense Saeed's release is personal for us. And so we should just be praising God and thanking God that he's given us that victory. Let's pray.

*Father, we just again thank you and we thank you for Saeed's release. We thank you that you are a sovereign God and your plan can never be frustrated. And Lord, this morning we're going to be again looking in the book of Daniel where once again we see that you are a sovereign God who can never be frustrated. I pray that you would give us the grace, the wisdom and the presence of your Holy Spirit to see and to understand what we have to learn from the book of Daniel and that it again would be of permanent value. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, we are embarking on a brand new study, we're studying the book of Daniel. And last week I introduced the book and we looked at the absolute disaster that it is describing at the very beginning. The book of Daniel opens up with this statement. This is Daniel 1:1. It says: *In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it, and the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the vessels of the house of God. And he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god,*

*and placed the vessels in the treasury of his god.*

So here's the disaster, Jerusalem is overrun, the sacred temple artifacts are now sitting not where they belong in the temple but in the treasury of a foreign god's temple. Many lives have been lost. Daniel and his contemporaries have been kidnapped. It was by all appearances a disaster. But we saw last time that the reason why this happened was not due to Nebuchadnezzar's cleverness or not even so much to Jehoiakim's wickedness but to God's sovereign plans for his people. *"The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand."* And we saw last week that God was just as willing to pursue an inglorious defeat at the hands of Babylonians as he was willing to pursue a glorious victory over Pharaoh and the Egyptians. You see, what mattered to God was not the glory of the victory itself, but the long term glory of his will being done and his kingdom advancing on earth. And so we came to see that God is quite willing to win by losing.

This morning we're going to examine this loss and we're going to see how God is still using it to speak to his people today. See, after Jerusalem was overrun, Nebuchadnezzar demonstrated just how brilliant a leader he was not just as a military commander but as somebody who was capable of building an empire. You see, it's not so simple to build an empire. You want to build an empire, you

have to learn to do a lot more than merely conquer and overrun your enemy. You see, the more territory you conquer, the more territory you're going to be responsible to hold on to, the more resources that's going to require. In fact this is exactly what we see going on in Iraq right now. I mean, ISIS at first was free to roam and pillage and conquer as much property as they could, but what they quickly saw that the more property they captured, well the more resources it required to hold on to that property. And as a result they started getting thinner and thinner in their ability to hold on to what it is they've captured. In fact we saw that last week. ISIS lost the city of Ramadi to the Iraqi Army. And the 250 of the soldiers that remained in Ramadi, they fled north to Mosul to escape and they were promptly surrounded by other ISIS fighters and burned to death for not fighting to the death. Now, Nebuchadnezzar was a lot more clever than the savages who make up ISIS, and he knew that if you truly want to expand your kingdom in any kind of a lasting way, then you have to make those that you have conquered into willing subjects in this new kingdom. Well, that's exactly what Nebuchadnezzar set out to do. And so immediately after he conquers Jerusalem he says this in *Daniel 1:3-4*, it says: *Then the king commanded Ashpenaz his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding and learning, and*

*competent to stand in the king's palace, and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.* That's another name for Babylonians. Nebuchadnezzar's plan was absolutely brilliant. And God gives us the details of his plan so that we can benefit from understanding just how Babylon works.

Now one of the commentators in the book of Daniel made the point that the world is basically divided into two different camps, there is Jerusalem and there is Babylon. And as I mentioned last week, there's the kingdom of God, which is Jerusalem, there's the kingdom of this world, which is Babylon. There are two different kingdoms with two different goals and two different means of achieving those goals. The goal of the kingdom of God is to glorify him and enjoy him forever and God is at work to empower individuals to do that very thing. Glorifying God is really just a matter of making his character and his attributes known. It's living out your life in such a way that calls attention to the wonder and the beauty of what God is doing in your life in transforming each of us into the very image of his Son. We say it all the time, God accepts all of us right where we are but he never, never leaves us there. And from the minute every one of us enters into the kingdom of God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ, God is at work and he's at work giving us the ability to glorify him by changing us uniquely into a reflection of his son. *Romans 8:28 says: And we know that for*

*those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. God is saying here this is the reason why we can say that everything in your life is going to work towards that one goal for good. And it's because God actively takes all things, the good things, the bad things, the things that we think are of no consequences, and he uses all of those things to grow us into the image of his Son. And that's how we glorify him, becoming new creatures in Christ. And that's why he says in 2 Corinthians 5:17: Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. That's the goal of Jerusalem. Now the goal of Babylon, the kingdom of this world on the other hand, their goal is to blind the rest of the world to the kingdom of God. It's to stand in the way of the citizens of the kingdom of God as they seek to glorify Him. That's why God says in 2 Corinthians 4:3: The god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. Bottom line, Babylon and Jerusalem are at war.*

Nebuchadnezzar in our text this morning represents how Babylon, or the world, seeks to go about advancing its own kingdom at the expense of the kingdom of God. I mean, his attack on Jerusalem and

his actions subsequent to the attack give us insight into just how the enemy advances his kingdom. Let me repeat what he did. This is *Daniel 1:3*. It says: *Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, youths without blemish, of good appearance, and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to stand in the king's palace, and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.* This was brilliant. This was a brilliant plan and it included four phases: delegate, designate, discriminate, and then indoctrinate. Delegate your expansion plans to others. Then designate the elites in society, then discriminate by singling out the best and brightest of those elites, and finally indoctrinate by capturing their minds.

Let me just take these one by one. This is the first tactic of Babylon. Delegate. Delegate your expansion plans to others. *"Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch."* This is just common sense. This is not just common sense but it's practiced by both sides. I mean Jerusalem and Babylon both delegate. We saw that in scripture. In fact it was Moses' father-in-law who told him he had to learn how to delegate authority because he could not manage the sheer numbers of people who needed his attention. This is *Exodus 18*: *So Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law*

and did all that he said. Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. And they judged the people at all times. Any hard case they brought to Moses, but any small matter they decided themselves. That's what Jerusalem does but Babylon does the very same thing with one very big difference. The difference is that here the kingdom of this world is an equal opportunity employer. See, Moses selected people who were approved by God to do the work of the kingdom of God. Satan and his minions are willing to use anyone and everyone to accomplish his ends. In fact, he has no problem even using the children of God to suit those ends. You know, when Jesus was preparing for his final push towards the cross, toward the very purpose for which he had come, he found standing in his way someone who had been extremely close to him, yet was still powerfully used by the enemy. You know who it was, it was Peter. This is *Matthew 16:21*. It says: *From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."* Jesus was wise enough to instantly see the real



source of Peter's rebuke, and he knew precisely who had delegated that task to Peter. When Jesus said, "*Get behind me, Satan!*" he was proving that the enemy is capable of infiltrating every and any group of people including believers. I mean now did Satan suddenly turned Peter from a disciple into some kind of demon-possessed monster? Well, the answer of course is no. I mean, Peter loved the Lord Jesus, but he was a fallen sinner like we all are and the enemy of our souls is quite willing to take advantage of any weakness that he sees in any one of us. Nebuchadnezzar delegated Ashpenaz because he couldn't be in two places at one time. Well, the enemy is willing to delegate to any and everyone what he thinks will be of use to him. I mean, if he could delegate to Peter himself, he can certainly delegate to you and me.

And let me tell you how this works out practically. Every week on Thursday mornings at 11:00 o'clock we have a prayer meeting at the pregnancy center, we do that on a very regular basis, because we know that next to the church, the pregnancy center is very high on the list of things that Satan detests and that he wants very much to destroy. The chances are pretty slim that he's going to be able to destroy us from the outside at least so far because we are a completely legal entity and we enjoy all of the protections that that affords. Now the way the enemy chooses to work is like Nebuchadnezzar chose to work. It's by taking ordinary people, even

Christians as well and using them, much as he tried to use Peter, as delegated agents. The enemy loves to sell discord and strife and enmity not as some kind of disembodied concept but as a rank and file conflict that develops among people trying to work together, particularly at the goal is advancing the kingdom of God. Now I've talked to a number of people who described a spirit of resentment, a spirit of bitterness and anger that they felt they were constantly fighting against every time they came to the Center to volunteer their time. That's not by accident. That's exactly how the enemy works. The enemy loves to sow discord wherever he can, and he'll delegate that task to anyone, even Christians. I mean that's why Paul forgave those who had so badly mistreated him in the Corinthian church. Paul said this in *2 Corinthians 1:11*, he says: *I have done this so that we may not be taken advantage of by Satan. For we are not ignorant of his schemes.* Paul understood where much of the conflicts that he faced came from and he wasn't about to be used that way by the enemy.

So that brings me to our first fairly obvious question this morning is: Have you ever been an agent of Babylon? I mean, has the enemy ever seen fit to delegate his intents and authority to you? It's important -- it's an important question to ask yourself the next time you find yourself embroiled in some kind of conflict. Is the enemy using me? Sometimes you and I unwittingly are doing the

enemy's bidding and many is a time when I encounter this kind of strife, I try to place it where I think it really belongs, and I try to say what Paul says. I've said it many, many times, we are not unaware of the enemy's schemes.

The second tactic of Babylon is designate. Designate the elites in society. Again *Daniel 1:3*: *Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility.* That's the elite. The elites in our society are found primarily in Washington, D.C. and Hollywood, in politics and in entertainment. And just like in Babylon, they have an agenda driven by the desire to advance their kingdom. I mean, they might not realize and maybe again they might realize but they are by and large delegated by the king of Babylon to do his bidding and to achieve his goals. And here's the interesting part. We know exactly what those goals are. We know what those goals are because Jesus told us in no uncertain terms what they are when he told the religious leaders that they too were his delegates. This is what Jesus said in *John 8:44*, and he cut right to the chase. He was talking to the religious leaders of his time who are actually delegates of Satan, delegates of Babylon. *And he said to them, "You are of your father the Devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires."* Well, what were those desires? Those desires were victory. They wanted to win. They wanted to win because

Jerusalem and Babylon are at war. And scripture points out exactly where this war had its beginning. It tells us in Revelation 12 that it started in heaven and it literally fell to planet earth. Revelation 12 says this, it says: *Then war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels also fought, but he could not prevail, and there was no place for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was thrown out -- the ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the one who deceives the whole world. He was thrown to earth, and his angels with him.* This is why I said last time there's a proxy war going on. There's a proxy war going on right here, right now today between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of this world. Jerusalem and Babylon in this case are the proxy players. God is using Babylon and Jerusalem in the book of Daniel to point out how both kingdoms operate.

At this point in Daniel's story, Nebuchadnezzar is simply yet another designated, delegated actor and he's working for what he thinks is only Babylon's advancement, but he'll stop at nothing to advance his kingdom. And if you doubt for a minute just how vicious Nebuchadnezzar was, just consider how he responded to a king that he had no use for. This is 2 Kings 25:6-7. It says: *Then they captured the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, and they passed sentence on him. They*

*slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes and put out the eyes of Zedekiah and bound him in chains and took him to Babylon. Never forget, Babylon always, always place for keeps. They are vicious. Babylon is the kingdom of this world and by extension, it is the kingdom of darkness. The goal is victory and the tools to obtain that victory will include anything including lies and murder. Nebuchadnezzar had no trouble whatsoever engaging in both and neither does the kingdom Nebuchadnezzar was inadvertently advancing. Again, listen to what Jesus said when he started to call out who these designated parties were. This is again, John 8:44. He says: "You are of your father the Devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and has not stood in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of lies."*

So what we have here is a war that actually started in heaven between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. It is a war that is played out every single day through the delegated actors of both sides. And as clear as God is about who is Babylon in this war, he is also very clear about who Jerusalem is. We are Jerusalem. God says this in *Ephesians 6: For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness,*

*against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.* See, the enemy delegates his authority to who will ever suit his goals and he designates his war plans through cultural elites. We've seen this laid out for us in some of the actions of these political elites who are merely the designated actors working out the desires of their individual kingdoms, and they work on both sides. There are some elites, praise God, who work for Jerusalem. Most work for Babylon. The goal of Babylon whether the individuals know it or not is to continue the war against heaven. Jesus said murder and lies are the -- are their stock and trade. This is how the enemy works, and I've said it before, there's no better combination of murder and lies in one single area that Jerusalem and Babylon have battled over since the Garden of Eden, and that battle that is expressed in the 21st century is over abortion. And to understand why abortion is so critical a battlefield, you have to understand the nature of the combatants. Satan is God's mortal enemy. He tried to wage a war directly at God and his angels and he was thoroughly and soundly defeated and thrown out of heaven. He landed in a rage on earth. And ever since then he has directed his hatred and rage at the only creature in all of creation who bears the imago dei, the very image of God. We're that creature. His rage is directed at us. Satan is not only a liar and a murderer, but he's a coward as well. He's never going to take on God himself because he already knows what the outcome of that's going to be.

Far better to focus his attacks on the creatures who bear the image of God. And what better place to do it than the very place where God says in *Psalm 139*: *You formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb.*

This is not the first time this has happened. Before abortion there was child sacrifice, and again, with the very same goal: attack God by attacking his image bearers. Satan will never attack God but he certainly won't pass up an opportunity to attack his image bearers through human sacrifice, and we've seen this borne out in the pages of scripture. *Leviticus 20* says: *The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Say to the people of Israel, any one of the people of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn in Israel who gives any of his children to Molech shall surely be put to death. The people of the land shall stone him with stones. I myself will set my face against that man and will cut him off from among his people, because he has given one of his children to Molech, to make my sanctuary unclean and to profane my holy name."* Molech was a monster. He was a monster god and children were offered up to him by being roasted alive. You know, it's thousands of years later we've moved way, way beyond that level of depravity. We no longer roast children. We just tear them limb from limb in the womb, whether it's by a vacuum aspirator or surgical instrument. You know, in 1973, nine Supreme Court justices who were the designated

agents of Babylon gave them one of the greatest victories they've ever had. January 22nd, 1973 is the day the United States made abortion legal. Today's the third Sunday in January, it's the day traditionally set aside as Sanctity of Life Sunday. See, in 1984 on the 11th anniversary of *Roe versus Wade* -- most of you know *Roe versus Wade* is the Supreme Court ruling that made abortion legal. Well, in 1984, on that day President Ronald Reagan proclaimed the very first Sanctity of Life Sunday. His successor, George H. W. Bush continued the practice until he was succeeded by President Bill Clinton who promptly put an end to publicly acknowledging Sanctity of Life Sunday from the White House. When George H. -- George W. Bush took over from President Clinton, guess what? Sanctity of Life Sunday was reestablished. If you peel back here a little bit you can actually see the designated actors working out the desires of each kingdom. You know, it should come as a surprise to no one that our current president for the past seven years has declined to support Sanctity of Life Sunday. See, Mr. Obama doesn't realize, but in this area he is a delegated authority designated as a cultural elite to promote Babylon's interests. He doesn't know or he doesn't care, but when it comes to abortion, he's got promoting Babylon down to a science. Again, let me revisit the game plan. This is Daniel. This is right at the very beginning. *The king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and*



*of the nobility, youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning and competent to stand in the king's palace, and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.*

Okay. As we see this unfold, Nebuchadnezzar's first goal is to delegate authority. *Then the king commanded Ashpenaz his chief eunuch.* He gives the jobs to others. The second is to designate a cultural elite. *Bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility.* That's Washington and Hollywood. The third goal was to discriminate among the cultural elite one particular subgroup, and that's what we'll look at next. This is verse 4: *Youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to stand in the king's palace.* Having established control over Jerusalem by military might, Nebuchadnezzar clearly wanted the brightest and the best to begin the process of controlling Jerusalem's hearts and minds, because that's how Babylon works. Nebuchadnezzar was wise enough to know that if you can get the cultural movers and shakers to move in your direction, they'll do the heavy lifting for you and move the culture almost effortlessly. His plan was brilliant. Delegate your expansion, plan to others, designate the elites in society, discriminate by singling out the best and brightest, and finally indoctrinate by

capturing their minds: *"To teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans."* Nebuchadnezzar knew what's critically important to change the way Jerusalem thought. He knew that he had to bring them around to Babylon's way of thinking and the only way to do that was not through military force, it was through indoctrination, to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans. Well that literature and that language uses lies and murder to promote the idea that a child in the womb has a right to live only, only if the mother decides it has that right.

One thing volunteering at a pregnancy center introduces you to is a category of client that's often referred to as abortion-minded. These are often times very frightened young women who have just recently learned that they are pregnant and they're trying to decide what to do. And when we encounter these women, the word goes out for everybody to be praying because everyone knows that literally that child's life is hanging in the balance. It's a matter of life and death for the baby she's now carrying, and sadly many of the women in that category opt to end their baby's lives and they do so in large part because Babylon has successfully indoctrinated the culture that such a choice is merely a minor medical procedure. Nebuchadnezzar would be proud. Our cultural elites from our president to our entertainment leaders are all committed to this indoctrination. For the past seven years now

we've been subject to a nightly barrage of the literature and language of Babylon and the vast majority of the cultural elites in the entertainment venue are clearly and obviously pro abortion. They are as determined as any to transform this culture into accepting the killing of children in the womb as a normal part of a woman's right to choose. And to do that they're following the recipe Nebuchadnezzar first offered thousands of years ago. But today they have at their disposal the most sophisticated tools there is, tools that Babylon never had. Just a few months ago one of the leading TV shows, a show appropriately called *Scandal* -- never seen it -- it was a groundbreaking show. They all hailed it because in their own eyes it was a courageous portrayal of one of the main characters undergoing an abortion. That's the literature and language of Babylon. This is how it works. Show it to you over and over, condition you, get you so you're very used to seeing this so it's not outrageous any more, so it's not something that you are really going to be moved by. Our culture soaks it up every night. After they showed this show, Planned Parenthood released this statement that said in part: "Tonight the millions of people who turn in to *Scandal* every Thursday night learn that our rights to reproductive health care are under attack. Tonight we saw one of our favorite characters make the deeply personal decision that one in three women have made in their lifetime. We just hope those in congress and throughout the nation who are steadfast on rolling

the clock back on reproductive health care access are taking note."

The Media Research Center is this tiny little voice that's pointing out what Babylon is up to, and they said this. They said, "Hollywood's liberal values permeate movies and television. Last night's episode of ABC's *Scandal* was pretty much an hour-long advertisement for Planned Parenthood. In the most disturbing scene, the main character has an abortion to *Silent Night*, a hymn celebrating the birth of Jesus playing in the background. This is Hollywood's moral depravity on full display. Whether it's *MTV*, *The View* or even *The Nightly News*, we have grown to expect that Babylon is going to dominate the culture, and the vast majority of those people in the culture don't even realize it.

In political circles we've also known that the elites have owned a cultural megaphone for the last seven years and now Babylon dominates our politics. Let me just say one thing about politics. I know it's impolitic to say this but I'm going to say it. I'm a single-issue voter. You know, for years I've heard people say that single-issue voters are narrow, primitive, closed-minded. I mean, who in the world would be so short-sighted as to make his political choices based only on one single issue? Well, let me tell you who, according to *NBC News*, just last week they had this headline:

"Obama Urges Public to Become 'Single-Issue Voters' On Gun Control

Reform." Well, apparently I'm in good company. I mean, our president said if we can save just one life, it's worth becoming a single-issue voter on gun control. How about saving millions of babies' lives? Since President Obama took office seven years ago, there's been over one million abortions per year, one million abortions that he will answer to God for, and guess what, so will we. You cannot spill the blood of so many innocents and expect that God's wrath is not going to be stirred. All the way back in Genesis when Cain slew Abel, God said this to him about shedding innocent blood. This is *Genesis 4:10*: *And the LORD said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground."* Today through abortion we multiplied that number by a factor of almost 59 million. The blood of all those innocents cries out from the ground for justice, and I personally am afraid to see what that justice is going to look like. Our president chooses to be a single-issue voter on the issue of gun control. I choose to be a single-issue voter on the issue of life. And the reason why is this: The issue of life is so absolutely critical to understanding who God is, what his kingdom is all about, what the war against this kingdom of this world is all about and how it plays itself out both in Jerusalem and Babylon that I, for the life of me, cannot see how anybody can be anything but a single-issue voter, and that issue, of course, is abortion. And I've said this before, I hold no brief whatsoever for the Republican party. I

would just as soon vote for a Democrat or a Republican or an Independent if there existed anywhere, somewhere, a Democrat who wasn't rabidly pro abortion. Now both Hillary and Bernie Sanders have no problem whatsoever with abortion, in fact they have no problem with late term abortion. They would make Nebuchadnezzar proud. The Democratic party is now the party of death, in my view, but I'm old enough to realize it wasn't always that way. Thirty or forty years ago, maybe fifty years ago the Democratic party had many pro-lifers in it and it was simply a different way to look at how government is run. Forty or fifty years ago that party was hijacked to Babylon and it's never been the same ever since.

So what do I do with my friends and my relatives or even my spouse who might be pro Democrat or even pro abortion? I think the answer to that is simple. You love them the way Christ loved you when you were in Babylon. You explain to them that God became a man, that God lived out a perfect life and that he went to the cross to offer up that life and his blood in order to pay for your sins and that his blood can cover any sin including the sin of abortion. You extend grace to them because you know grace has been extended to you. And you also learn to identify what Paul described as the schemes of the enemy. That's why we study God's words and that's why we're now in the book of Daniel. I mean, God not only wins by losing as I pointed out last week, but when he does lose, he gives

us powerful examples so that we can learn from them.

You know, Nebuchadnezzar understood exactly how to promote the advancement of Babylon: delegate your expansion plans to others, designate the elites in society, discriminate by singling out the best and the brightest, and finally indoctrinate by capturing their minds. It was a brilliant plan. But here's what greatly encourages me as I read the book of Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar's plan was no match for God. It was no match for God and God's people. You know, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah proved that as we're going to see. We know them as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And they along with Belteshazzar, or Daniel, modeled for us how to live in Babylon like you're still in Jerusalem. That challenge didn't end with them. Make no mistake about it, we are living in Babylon today and by God's grace and by Daniel's words we're going to grow our skills in how to stake our claim to Jerusalem. Let's pray.

*Father God, I do thank you that you are a God who is willing to win by losing, and we see the opening of the book of Daniel and it just seems like such terrible things are going on and it seems like all is lost, Daniel and his mates are kidnapped and taken to Babylon. Father, I just thank you for peeling back the layers and giving us the ability to see how Babylon works. And Lord, we see Babylon all*

around us, we see people captured by Babylon and I pray that each and every one of us would extend the grace of Christ to those who are in Babylon. If there's a woman who is struggling with whether or not to keep her child and she decides she's going to have an abortion, extend grace to them, extend the grace of Christ to cover all sins. I just pray that you would give us the ability to see and to sense and to know where we are and to understand that you alone have the answers. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.