

Pastor Tom Mortenson

Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

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Daniel's Corporate Confession and Ours

Daniel 9:1-19

Prayer: *Father God, we just again thank you that you are indeed our God, our heavenly Father and that you have gifted us with your Son. We have this incredible privilege, Lord, of being redeemed and having the grace and the power of your Holy Spirit and to live our lives to bring honor and glory to you. And this morning, Lord, again I want to go into your word, I want to examine a very controversial subject, a very controversial area, I just want to examine it in a way that brings honor and glory to you. And so I pray that your Holy Spirit would guide us, I pray that your Holy Spirit would accompany us, would accompany me and this entire congregation as we go into your word and examine it. Give us your grace, your peace and your power to grasp these things and to make them again a permanent part of our lives, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, God's timing I think is amazing. I know we're in the book of Daniel and we just happened to be in the very moment that he's engaged in a very lengthy corporate confession. This is our

nineteenth message on Daniel. And where we're at right now, it's the first year of the reign of Darius. This is the third king that Daniel is going to serve under. He's the king who killed Belshazzar, the very night that he drunkenly mocked God by proposing a toast, if you remember, those secret vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had looted from the temple in Jerusalem, he met his end that night through Darius and Daniel is now speaking under the rule of Darius and he's been studying the scriptures and he learns from the prophet Jeremiah that Israel's 70-year banishment in Babylon is about to come to an end and instead of rejoicing, instead of packing his bags and getting ready to go, he's filled with conviction about not only his sins but the sins of his people. And this is how he expresses his bitter conviction. Bud, if you would come up, my voice is kind of shot, I've asked Bud if he could read. This is a lengthy reading. This is *Daniel 9:1-19*. Bud is going to give us his dulcet tones as he -- sure whatever works.

Daniel Chapter 9, beginning at verse 1: *In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans -- in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish 70 years in the desolations of Jerusalem. Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer*

and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. And I prayed to the LORD my God, and made confession, and said, "O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments, we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments. Neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings and our princes, to our fathers and all the people of the land. O Lord, righteousness belongs to You, but to us shame of face, as it is this day -- to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those near and those far off and all the countries to which You have driven them because of the unfaithfulness which they've committed against You. O Lord, to us belongs shame of face, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, because we've sinned against You. To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him. We have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His laws, which He set before us by His servants the prophets. Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your law, and has departed so as not to obey Your voice; therefore the curse and the oath written in the law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against Him. And He has confirmed His words, which He spoke against us and against our judges who judged us, by bringing upon us a great disaster, for under the whole heaven such has never been

done as what has been done to Jerusalem. As it is written in the law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us; yet we have not made our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth. Therefore the LORD has kept the disaster in mind, and brought it upon us; for the LORD our God is righteous in all the works which He does, though we have not obeyed His voice. And now, O Lord our God, who brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and made Yourself a name, as it is this day -- we have sinned, we have done wickedly! O Lord, according to all Your righteousness, I pray, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; because of our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people are a reproach to all those around us. Now therefore, our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and his supplications, and for the Lord's sake cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate. O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplication before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies. O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name."

Thanks, Bud. You know, of all the people in the scripture who

could be making a public confession, Daniel would seem to be one of the most -- or the least likely. He is one of the few characters in all of scripture who wasn't chastised by God for some sin or transgression, I mean, like Joseph, Daniel's record in scripture is impeccable. Nonetheless, he engages in this lengthy confession identifying corporately with the sins of his people without trying to distance himself from the sins he doesn't appear to be guilty of. He confesses Israel's corporate rebellion by saying in verse 5: *"We have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments."* Nowhere in the book of Daniel could we find evidence that Daniel was guilty of departing from God's precepts and judgments and yet he insists on including himself in Israel's corporate guilt. In addition to rebellion, Daniel goes on to confess in verse 6, defiance. He says: *"Neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets."* In verse 8, speaks of shame. He says: *"To us belongs shame of face, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, because we have sinned against You."* In verse 10 he speaks of disobedience: *"We have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His laws, which He set."* In verse 13, it's unrepentance: *"All this disaster has come upon us; yet we have not made our prayer before the LORD our God, that He might turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth."* In verse 15 it's wickedness: *"We have sinned, we have done wickedly!"* In verse 16

it's reproach: *"For our sins and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people are a reproach to all of those around us."*

Daniel cries out to God for his own sin and for the corporate wickedness of his people. And I can't help but notice how much of Daniel's plea for his people can be applied to us and to the church in North America in the 21st century. I am no Daniel and it is no stretch whatsoever for me to include myself in the corporate sins of God's people. But this is the problem of late that I want to discuss this morning, and I suspect it may be your problem as well when it comes to this recent election. I'm not certain what I'm supposed to be confessing of. And understand, I'm not being facetious here. I'm trying to understand both sides of the reaction to this recent election. I have spent the past week reading many different responses to the election by people of faith, some are thoughtful, some are absolutely thoughtless, but all of them come from a conviction that we, as a church, have done wickedly. I mean this election has divided the church. You know, one of my daughters was at a Bible study where she admitted reluctantly that she had voted for Mr. Trump, and she was told to her face by someone who got up and said, "You are a racist," and then got up and walked out. I don't think that's an isolated response. See, one side is rejoicing that we have at long last

begun to address an open wickedness in our culture and have begun the process politically of addressing the cultural rot that has infected and oppressed the church; but the other side, the other side is in deep mourning that the church in its blindness has supported a wicked ruler simply to make sure that it holds on to power that it desperately craves, and it says the church needs to confess this. Well, this is quite a serious matter because I believe that confession is an absolutely critical part of my ability to grow in Christ. I mean you've probably heard me quote this verse dozens and dozens of times, it's *1 John 1:9: If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* I mean God is making it very clear. He longs to forgive us, he longs to cleanse us but he also makes it clear that there's a condition attached to finding that forgiveness, and it's all contained in that little word "if." If we confess. The Greek word for "confess" is a combination of two words and it means "to same speak." And what God says, what he's meaning here is what it means to confess is to agree with God, to speak the same language that he is speaking when it comes to convicting us about our own personal wickedness. See, to agree with God's Holy Spirit when he is convicting me of sin is the key to having that sin forgiven and cleansed. And to resist that conviction, to insist on my own self-protecting convictions instead of the Holy Spirit's is to actively shun God's forgiveness. Jesus

spoke and we all have this struggle with this idea of what is the unforgivable sin. Jesus spoke about it in *Luke 12:10*. He said, *"And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven."* To blaspheme the Holy Spirit is to repeatedly refuse his conviction to speak the same language as God when it comes to admitting my guilt. And understand, by this standard, any sin, any sin whatsoever, from murder on the one hand to stealing a paper clip, it can become an unforgivable sin. It becomes unforgivable not because God has made it so but because I have made it so by refusing to agree with him and therefore seek his forgiveness and cleansing.

As I said, this past week has seen multiple calls for confession of wickedness in the church and it's not at all unlike the confessions that we see Daniel making this morning. The difference is they're divided along ideological lines. There are those who are rejoicing or at least relieved at the outcome of this election and they have to understand that there are brothers and sisters in the body of Christ who take the exact opposite approach. They see this as a time of deep mourning and reproach for the church. I don't recall a time where I've ever seen the church as divided as this. And I would challenge each and every one of us this morning to treat each and every call for confession and forgiveness with a spirit

determined to want what God wants in all of this. That means if you lean left, you have to listen hard and you have to listen hard to what the right is saying; and if you lean right, you need to look beyond the easy, dismissive responses to ask God to show you what is at the heart of those who are disagreeing with you.

As someone who voted with grave reservations for Mr. Trump, I want to take you where I feel I need to go in examining all of the evidence that cries out that I have been blinded to sins that are staring me right in the face. And I want to start out by quoting an article by Thabiti Anyabwile who many of you have heard, many of you know, he's an author, a pastor, he's a frequent conference speaker, we have many times have been blessed by going to the T4G conferences that he has spoken at and he's also a black man. Well, the day after the election he wrote an article and the article was entitled "Four Problems Associated with White Evangelical Support of Donald Trump." I want to talk about the four points he brings, and I've edited them for time's sake, but these are the gist of what he is saying.

First, "The movement has surrendered" -- the movement means evangelicals, it's us -- "the movement has surrendered any claims to the moral high ground in electoral politics. The lion's share of evangelicals put character concerns aside and pulled the lever

for a man whose character is every bit as 'flawed' as President Clinton's, whose impeachment evangelicals supported. For that choice, as many have already observed, the moral high ground is lost."

Second, "The movement has abandoned public solidarity with groups who considered Mr. Trump an existential threat to them." He says, "I'm speaking here of the many groups who expressed reservation regarding Mr. Trump's racism, religious bigotry, misogyny, isolationism, and nativism. People with those concerns came from a lot of groups in the country, including African-American Christians, many themselves evangelicals. At 80 percent, white evangelicalism en masse sided with Mr. Trump over and against the concerns of fellow evangelicals weary of his alienating and divisive rhetoric and campaign promises. For many, evangelicals expressed solidarity (again) with some of the worst aspects of American history and culture while abandoning brothers and sisters of like precious faith. Coming back from that may be difficult."

Thirdly, "The movement failed to escape its partisan bias in favor of more principled and biblical stands." He says, "Some evangelicals offered 'biblical' justification for voting Trump and minimized his character flaws. Others endorsed and vigorously campaigned for him. I've long endured evangelicals questioning

African-American allegiance to the Democratic Party. 'Why do nearly all African Americans vote for Democrats?' they ask. 'Isn't it better if African Americans refuse allegiance to that party?' I resonate with the sentiment; but I wonder if it's not born in some sense of hypocrisy. If the movement doesn't escape its partisan pull, its usefulness will be seriously compromised."

And finally, he says, "The movement has made its evangelistic mission more difficult with many it wants to reach." He says, "A good number of people outside the faith look at the exit polls aghast and angry. Aghast because they themselves cannot imagine supporting a candidate with the personal moral flaws of Mr. Trump. Angry because they've watched evangelicals moralize in public for a long time, often shaming people for their sins and moral weaknesses. The vote for Trump creates or amplifies a credibility problem for evangelicals. Why should the unrepentant listen to their gospel when it seems so evident they've not applied that gospel to their political choices? 'Shouldn't we view evangelicals as basically concerned with politics over all things?' they ask. Convincing answers will be difficult to find. For many, Christ and the gospel are now bound up -- rightly or wrongly -- with evangelicals choosing a man with little resemblance to either. And all of this was wrought by the bulk of evangelicalism itself. No one forced this on the movement. An 81 percent return" --

that's how many evangelicals voted for Trump. He says: "An 81 percent return will not allow us to discard these voters as 'not truly evangelical.' At the moment, that's exactly who evangelicalism is. This is why I tweeted, to the confusion or chagrin of a few, 'Congratulations white evangelicalism on your candidate's win. I don't understand you and I think you just sealed some awful fate.'"

Well those are incredibly tough words. And understand something, these are not the words of some left wing crank. These are not the bitter rantings of a sore loser either. These are real concerns about real sins that this brother sees the church either ignoring or embracing. And I quote Mr. Anyabwile because I think his article is the more cogent of the ones that I've read, and I've read close to a dozen. And they are calling on the church to acknowledge its sin in voting for Mr. Trump. Now as a pastor, I think it is critical that we as a church consider any and all possibilities that we might not be seeing things as we ought. And so I want to examine each of these issues that our brother brought up not so much to defend myself but to ask publicly and corporately of God that he would give us the grace to seek out the truth no matter how much it hurts. I mean that's what Daniel did and that's what we owe ourselves and that's what we owe our God.

And so the first issue Thabiti raised is that a vote for Mr. Trump is a surrender of the moral high ground. And understand me now as I go into this, I'm not trying to defend myself here. I'm merely trying to understand the full implications of the issue here. I've made it quite clear that I found Mr. Trump on many levels morally reprehensible. I even used a term to describe him, I called a "vulgarian." That's a real term and it means somebody who wears his vulgarity on his sleeve. What I find very confusing in all of this though was the evangelical silence four years ago with regard to another candidate who in my view embodied a far greater sin. That was Mr. Romney's Mormonism. I mean I hate being in a position of defending Trump's sexism and his racism and his locker room behavior, and I won't, I refuse to, but when I place him side by side with another man who actively practiced a false religion, I found the evangelical community strangely silent. I mean if we just go back four years to the previous election, we had an evangelical community that seemed to not care very much about a candidate whose stated religious beliefs were in absolute defiance of the first commandment not to worship other gods but who certainly was with us on cultural issues.

Now just to jog our memories, this is an article by Jonathan Merritt of the *Religion News Service* written in June of 2012. It's entitled: "Analysis: The Unexpected Evangelical Silence on Mitt

Romney's Mormonism." He says: "What's surprising in 2012 is the relative lack of anxiety on the other side, among evangelicals who for years considered Mormonism a 'cult' that was to be feared, not embraced. In fact, the relative ambivalence among prominent evangelicals about this new 'Mormon moment' -- and the fact that Romney's campaign could mainstream Mormonism right into the Oval Office -- could radically shift the dynamics on America's political and religious landscape. 'You can already see the change in thinking among many evangelicals who see Mitt Romney more as the Republican candidate for president and less as a Mormon,' said Leith Anderson, president of the National Association of Evangelicals, who declined, when asked, to label Mormonism a 'cult.'"

Now, I'm somebody who is very concerned about giving up the moral high ground, but I wonder where this concern was four years ago, I mean, it may well have been there and I may not have just heard about it but I do know that it became a major issue among evangelicals this year with this candidate. But I just want to raise the issue that if the vote for Mr. Trump is to vote for racism, sexism, nativism, and homophobia, then why wasn't voting for Mr. Romney the equivalent of worshiping a false God? I mean, it seemed to me that within the evangelical community, the silence about Romney's commitment to this false God was deafening. Back

then I heard echoes of what I've heard this time, we're not electing a pope, we're not electing a pastor, we're electing a politician. And here's what I wonder. I wonder could it be that Mr. Romney was acceptable because he was anything but vulgar in the way he presented himself? I mean, he is by all standards a very decent, moral, upstanding man but he's also a member in very good standing of what is inarguably a false cult who, if you remember four years ago, was running against a man who at least claimed to be a Christian. So I'm really trying to understand the truth here about giving up the moral high ground and how that happens, because it seems to me that the issue here is really that Mr. Trump's sins are culturally far more distasteful than Mr. Romney's, and no doubt they are. But understand when it comes to moral high ground, my choice was not made in a vacuum. My choice for Mr. Trump was over and against that of Mrs. Clinton, it was a binary decision and a very difficult one to make at that. See, the choice in my mind was always which of two flawed characters is the lesser evil and just what comprises the moral high ground. And for me the moral high ground has always been life itself. I've made the case again and again that no form of social justice, whether it's related to employment or health care or the justice system, none of that matters to someone who's already dead. And that taking the life of somebody before they've even had a chance to be born is by far the greatest social evil a society can commit. So Mr. Trump's stand on

behalf of the unborn was the deciding factor for me. I had concluded that the chances of Mr. Trump actually doing what he said he would do with regard to the unborn was comparatively slim. We all know, much of his political life he was pro-choice, but I was comparing those slim chances to those of Mrs. Clinton's stated intentions about the unborn, and those chances were none. She had stated categorically that the unborn had no rights and that she was in favor of unfettered abortion including the practice of partial birth abortion, although she never put it quite that way. She was the most extreme pro-abortion candidate ever to run for office in the history of the United States. And just to put her position in context, consider this statement made by Lifenews.com. "The United States is currently one of only nine nations that allow abortion after 14 weeks of gestation. Even among this group, however, the United States is one of the most permissive in its treatment of abortion, placing it in the company of China, North Korea, and Canada, the only countries in the world that permit abortion for any reason after fetal viability."

So Mrs. Clinton's close ties with Planned Parenthood and her unwavering support for an abortion position so extreme that only China, North Korea, and Canada agree with it. Well, that put the chances of her moving in a pro-life direction at none. Simple logic tells you that if you have to choose between slim and none

that slim is going to win. So I didn't have any problem reasoning that I was not giving up the moral high ground because virtually every other complaint that's been registered against Mr. Trump has come far short of the claim that his opponent was actively promoting, for want of a better word, murder. Clearly he's made a intemperate remarks about bombing noncombatants in war and holding whole families responsible for the actions of terrorists. But I drew a distinction between saying something in the heat of the moment that's stupid, something that is dangerous, and arriving coolly and deliberately at a policy position that you are quite willing to defend. And we know that Mrs. Clinton is quite willing to defend her position on abortion. I seriously doubt that Mr. Trump intends to bomb the families of combatants. But I confess I was willing to take that risk in order to support his position, in order to support him over Mrs. Clinton. That was my reasoning, that was my moral high ground. I just want to state it so it's open and obvious, and I understand, if I have sinfully misread God's leanings here, I'm asking for the Holy Spirit to publicly convict me.

And secondly, Thabiti said: "The movement has abandoned public solidarity with groups who consider Mr. Trump an existential threat to them." And again, I understand this is an incredibly important consideration, but understand, that fear cuts both ways. I also

don't know that folks on the other side are willing to take into consideration the existential threat that the conservative evangelical community has been living with for the last eight years. I mean let me explain why conservative Christians may have supported Mr. Trump based on the fears that they have. I can speak from personal experience here, I mean, my grandson who is in the second grade, he went to a public school, he was warned not once but twice about bringing his Bible to school. He was told that that might offend some of the other students. This is a second grader. I mean the school like every other public educational institution has systematically banned even passing mention of the existence of God from every single aspect of what public education is all about. I don't need to go into any of the gory details because you've seen them, you've heard them every single day for years now. Their particular school bragged that they would be the very first transgender bathroom in the State of New York. So my daughter and her husband had enough and they pulled him out of the school and it wasn't until they enrolled him in a very costly private Christian school that they then saw them blossom and realized how dark and oppressive the educational system was that they were in. I mean we read constantly about faith being ridiculed and sexual perversion being celebrated in our educational system and doesn't that in some way constitute an existential threat? And what are conservative Christians to think when

Mrs. Clinton actually said of them in one of her speeches "deep-seated cultural codes, religious beliefs and structural biases have to be changed."

Kirsten Powers who is herself a very left leaning individual, she wrote this about that in USA Today. She said this: "This darn world just won't stop clinging to religion. But Hillary Clinton is on the case. At last week's Women in the World Summit, Clinton explained to her high-end Manhattan audience that 'deep-seated cultural codes, religious beliefs and structural biases have to be changed' regarding 'reproductive health care.' Clinton's comments echo those of the New York Times columnist Frank Bruni, who wrote this month that opposing same-sex marriage based on religious beliefs 'elevates unthinking obeisance above intelligent observance,' and he argued for 'freeing religions and religious people from prejudices that they needn't cling to.' Bruni quoted a gay rights activist who said, 'Church leaders must be made' to 'take homosexuality off the sin list.'"

Really? We must be made to take homosexuality off the sin list. That sounds like a genuine existential threat to me. Stephanie Wang wrote an article published by the *Religious News Service* that sums it up well. It was entitled, "Bigotry? Hatred? Christians Say They're Tired of Being Made into the Bad Guys." "That's the

tenor of the talk these days as powerful advocates try to write protections into law for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Those advocates, battling against conservative Christians who are staunch in their beliefs of right and wrong, wonder why anyone would deny others their rights. But some Christians say they're tired of being made into the bad guys. They're tired of being called the bigots, the haters. Because they feel the same way: It's bigotry, toward them. It's hatred, directed at them. It's discrimination, against them. They are the ones being bullied, they insist. In a country where the cultural tide seems to be moving away from hard-and-fast biblical prohibitions, they feel the government is abandoning them. Once at the core of American politics, some evangelical Christians feel increasingly relegated to the fringe, betrayed by their own conservative lawmakers as their cultural dominance is usurped by a smaller group wielding the heft of the media and corporations. It is they, many argue, who are the army of freedom fighters in this debate. The LGBT rights that others see increasingly as a matter of civil rights, some evangelical Christians see as a moral wrong. Expanded protections, they fear, would create 'special rights' for LGBT people that could supersede their right to speak out against homosexuality. To those Christians -- and this is an issue that divides many Christians -- LGBT rights represent the threat of government deciding where their right of religious expression

'ends' so others' rights can begin, said Arthur Farnsley. There's a certain degree to which people are going to be told, 'You can have your religious beliefs and opinions. And you can practice them in your churches, synagogues and mosques. But in the public sphere, you're going to have to deal with the greater diversity and recognize civil rights laws,' Farnsley said. But where will the line be drawn between religion and the public sphere?"

And we've seen this. We've seen photographers and florists and even pizza parlors that have been fined and arrested, individuals arrested for following their consciences here. And I suggest to you is that not a threat? And now the other side has a hard time seeing this argument as legitimate. They see Mr. Trump and his campaign as a concerted effort to go back to the days of the Jim Crow laws, of police brutality, and institutional bigotry. And what's adding to this fear on both sides was that this was the year of the dog whistle politics. You know what a dog whistle statement is? Picture it, I mean, a dog whistle is something you can blow a dog whistle and there's a dozen dogs that will hear it; nobody else will. It's designed to be very, very selective. A dog whistle statement is one that sounds innocuous on the surface but is actually designed to speak to your people what you're really intending to say. And "Make America Great Again" was seen by many as the classic dog whistle statement. You see, to one group of

people it meant stopping the cultural rot that had the whole country talking about transgender bathrooms but to the other group of people it was a wink and a nod legitimizing the worse kind of racial bigotry. I mean to them it was just saying encoded language, "Hey, just trust me, we're going to put those people back in their place." Given Mr. Trump's take-no-prisoners attitude, I understand exactly why racial minorities and the poor and the LGBT community would see this as an existential threat. And I believe it's critical to acknowledge how legitimate that fear was. And here's the point. The point is both sides were frightened. And neither candidate did much to assuage that fear.

Thirdly, he says: "The movement failed to escape its partisan bias in favor of more principled and biblical stand." Well, to that I say, really, Thabiti? Am I that tied into the GOP that I just have to hold water for whatever candidate they put forward? I mean I can speak for myself, and I can say, I've said it publicly many times, I don't trust either party at all. And here's my point, if there was a Democrat who was pro-life, I would give him as serious consideration as I would anyone else, but there never was one. There hasn't been for years. I mean of all of the statements that Thabiti is making, I think this one was the weakest.

And finally, Thabiti says: "Finally the movement has made its

evangelistic mission more difficult with many it wants to reach." And again, I want to go back to the point I made about Mr. Romney before, basically if voting for Mr. Trump means I have to defend the gospel against my implicit support for racism, homophobia, and bigotry, then I'm going to have to assume that voting for Mr. Romney would have meant I'd have to defend the gospel against an even greater evil and that is worshiping a false God. I mean, forget politics, this is a gospel -- a false gospel, it says Jesus Christ was a man and his brother was Satan. I mean why was that okay? And again, I go back to this idea that God in his judgment of our country gave us two very difficult choices. You know, one had a glimmer of hope and one I considered to be absolutely hopeless. I mean I'd already stated my opinion that I was voting for a platform rather than a president, and I will stand on the fact that the Republican platform affirms the right of the unborn to live and that marriage is to be between a man and a woman. And the Democratic platform specifically stood against those two propositions. So I cannot for the life of me understand how people could support that platform by supporting that candidate. And like I've said many, many times, I respect people who could not vote for either candidate. I understand that. I get it. But I still to this day have a hard time understanding two different categories of people, those who voted for Mrs. Clinton knowing what she stands for, and those who were enthusiastically supportive of Mr. Trump

knowing his character flaws. I see neither of those choices as God-pleasing. But I'm open to hearing otherwise.

However, to each group I can say what President Obama and Mrs. Clinton both said, and they said it's time to give the new president a chance. I, for one, am greatly encouraged by the men and the women that Mr. Trump is surrounding himself with and the careful way he seems to be addressing his transition. I am just overwhelmed at the grace of God in all of this. Because I have to go back to Daniel, and I have to go back to his confession. You see, I see our country as just as worthy of the confession that Daniel made as Daniel's country was because I see the exact same sins. I mean to repeat, Daniel says in addition to rebellion, he goes on to confess in verse 6, defiance. He says: *"Neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets."* We're in the middle of re-writing the words of the prophets. I've seen the Bible twisted into a pretzel in order to justify positions about sexuality that were absolutely unthinkable a decade ago. And in verse 8 Daniel speaks of shame, he says: *"To us belong shame of face, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, because we have sinned against you."* Let me tell you something, in this country we corner the market on sin and shame. I mean I've seen sin normalized, customized, packaged and sold in our music, in our entertainment, in our movies. Television drama has become largely un watchable if

you want to keep a clean conscience and it's effect has been devastating. Things that should have caused us to blush no longer do so. It's been said America's answer to shame is shamelessness.

In verse 10 Daniel discusses disobedience. He says: *"We have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which He set."* Again if you talk to anybody, anyone who's in the teaching profession, if you talk to cops, you talk to people who have to interact with people on a regular basis, you know that the spirit of rebellion and disobedience that is alive in our culture is alive from kindergarten through college and into even into the workplace. Just ask a cop or teacher. In verse 13 Daniel speaks of un repentance. He says: *"All this disaster has come upon us; yet we have not made our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth."* You know, we often quote 2 Chronicles 7:14: *"If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and forgive their sin and heal their land."* We not only quote it, we even sing it. We just don't do it. You see, it's not the unbelieving public who have been charged with what Daniel said, *"making our prayer before the LORD our God,"* it's us.

Verse 15, Daniel speaks of wickedness. He says: *"We have sinned,*

we have done wickedly!" Our problem is not our political leaders, our problem is us. Now do you believe that? I mean, do you believe that we have sinned, that we have done wickedly corporately as Daniel acknowledged and individually as well? See, if you don't believe that, then you will never get to a place of confession where you're willing to agree with God when his Holy Spirit is convicting you. If we do not confess, we do not confess what we are not convicted of. And brothers and sisters, just like Daniel is confessing, we, too, have done wickedly.

And finally, he speaks of reproach. He says: *"For our sins and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people are a reproach to all those around us."* I have to agree with Thabiti on a whole lot of what he said. You know, there's no question that the rest of the world looks at us evangelicals often times with reproach and it's because we don't live out the lives that we claim to believe in. We as evangelicals are riddled with hypocrisy and contention and deceit and yet we expect the world to beat a pathway to our door for the gospel that we're offering them. I mean, I thank God that the power of the gospel lies with God and not with us. I mean that God would become a man, that he would sinlessly live out his life among us and then offer up that life on a cross so that we could have his righteousness to offer God instead of our own, that's the message that God has given us to give the world,

and we've clouded it with politics and fear. And yet, and yet God continues to pour out his love on us. I mean just like the Jews had in Babylon, we have the love of a God who will never, never quit on us, a God who continues to fix his love on us because he has chosen us from the beginning as the objects of his love and he will never, never give up on us. We are being shaped and molded into the very image of his Son and sometimes, sometimes that requires a painful admission that we're not where we ought to be.

So let me make this personal. Is God speaking to you? Is he speaking to you about a new level of commitment to a gospel that reaches out with the love of Christ to people who don't see the world the way you see it, to people who live in fear of people like us? We need to see demonstrated on a concrete level that the love of Christ cuts across every single division there is, whether it's racial, sexual, economic, or political. I know I feel like God who in every way owes us nothing but justice has given us the potential of a great and grand mercy here. And there's no doubt Mr. Trump is by every metric a fallen, broken vessel, but so far he has surrounded himself with men who are sober and who are capable of giving us a government that all parties can be at peace with. But most notably is the position of the highest power so far in fleshing out his government has gone to Mr. Pence, a man who is a committed, tested, born-again believer in Jesus Christ, and so we

need to pray mightily for him and his influence in that cabinet. And we need to take seriously yet another command. I wonder if we have even to this day, and yet I can't imagine a time when it would be more necessary and appropriate and I will close with it, it's an exhortation. This is 1 Timothy 2. God says: *Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior. Let's pray.*

Father God, I just, again, I thank you for your word, I thank you for your truth, I thank you for the position that you have put us in. I grieve over the fact that we are divided over this, over politics, over this issue. I long for the ability to heal that division, but I also need to speak to the truth and speak to what is real. And so I pray that you would give us the ability to reach out and feel what the other side is feeling and understand the fear that they fear and that you would enable us to consciously enter into their lives in a way that enables us to share the gospel cross culturally. Lord, give us the ability to do the hard work to examine ourselves, to be willing to come before you, to be willing to hear the convicting power of your Holy Spirit when he calls us to acknowledge the sins and to speak the same speak with him about

those sins. Give us the ability to do that. Give us the ability to no longer be a reproach as we handle this incredibly precious gospel you've given us. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.