

Esther 9

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[0:00] Great. Shall we pray now as we look at this text? Let's bow our heads. Lord, thank you that you speak to us through your words.

! Thank you that even though this text is from thousands of years ago, that you still use it today to speak to our hearts, to teach us about who you are and who we are.

Lord, please use your words powerfully this morning to minister to us, to speak to us that we might be changed by your words, to be more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

Help me as I speak, Lord. I am weak, but you are strong. May the glory go to you. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, have you been in a situation where you have felt scared?

Have you been in a situation where you have felt relieved? Phew. Well, this weekend, my wife lost her car key, the only car key she had, on a Cornish beach.

[1:14] And she spent hours looking for it, Friday I think, and then she went back Saturday and tried to look for it. Thankfully, my father-in-law had a metal detector. But they couldn't find it.

And they were about to give up. And they thought, we'll just ask this shopkeeper, see if they've had it in. And lo and behold, they had. What a relief.

That, yeah, they should have gone there first, Steve says, yeah. So, wow, they found the key, even though I've sent the spare one off. It's a minor relief, isn't it?

If you've been diagnosed with a life-threatening disease, then if this disease is cured, you are mighty relieved, aren't you? Wow.

A major relief. Every breath that you breathe. Every day you think, wow, Lord, thank you so much that you've given me life. We have all felt scared and relieved this morning, whoever we are.

[2:19] And today's story is about this. One of being scared and one of having relief. So let's look at this text. The great reversal is my first point.

It's the great reversal. Well, here in chapter nine, we read of an amazing emancipation.

Relief for the Jews. It is 473 years before Christ. God's chosen people are scattered throughout the Persian Empire.

They're exiled from their beloved lands. They are, by and large, marginalized. Powerless.

Powerless. They're a hated people group in this ginormous foreign superpower.

Remember, it goes from Ethiopia to Pakistan. It's the big superpower. It's ruled by a strong, tyrannical, changeable king.

[3:28] Imagine what life was like. Your freedom was limited. Persecution could be round the corner. You feel trapped, hemmed in.

You might feel very frightened. Then it arrives. An edict is declared in January that all Jews are to be exterminated.

That's you as a covenant person in the kingdom of God. In every province of the kingdom. On the 13th of the 12th month, you have one year of life left.

You've got nowhere to run to. You can't get on a plane and leave. Added to that fear is perhaps the anger.

That you've done nothing wrong to deserve this. You've committed no crime. The only reason you are going to die is that you are a covenant member of God's household.

[4:40] Powerless. Angry. Frustrated. Your only option is to cry out to Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel, for deliverance.

And boy, how does he deliver? However, the king Xerxes reverses his decision that the Jews should be annihilated.

He changes the edict. We saw that in chapter 8, verse 11. You can read it. It says, God's people can defend themselves against their enemies.

They can destroy them. Take their possessions. Wow! What a turnaround! What a reversal! Did you notice the reversals in the text?

The first one. The power now lies with the Jews to be. No one could stand against them.

[6:12] Because the people of all the other nationalities were afraid of them. The second point there. The other nation groups are afraid of them.

What a reversal! They were afraid of Haman and the enemies, the Jews that is. Now the other nations are afraid of them. And thirdly, the government officials are now on their side.

Did you see that in verse 3? And all the nobles of the provinces, the satraps, the governors and the king's administrators helped the Jews. And lastly, fourthly, Mordecai is becoming more and more powerful.

That person who was going to be sent to the gallows is now respected as a prime minister in verse 4. Did you see that?

He became prominent in the palace. His reputation spread throughout the provinces. And he became more and more powerful. Brothers and sisters, this all points to Yahweh.

[7:33] The God who cares for his covenant people. The God who says to Joshua, no one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you.

I will never leave you nor forsake you. This is the God who rescues his people. What a great reversal!

Then it arrives. This is not a fatalism.

No, this amazing reversal points to a God who is intricately interested in his people. Us. The Jews at that time.

He is in the business of saving his people from the cause of death. Rescuing them. Bringing them back home and giving them a future.

[8:41] This points to our great redemption through Jesus Christ. Though we were far from God. Under a sentence of death.

His rightful punishment was on us. As we had rejected him. We had turned our back against God. Yet in his loving mercy.

He took us from the mouth of hell. And brought us. Paying the great price. Friends. This great reversal is the cross of Christ.

He bore that death which I deserved. Alienation from God. Yes. Jesus the son was abandoned by the father.

For me. So that I could be liberated. Brought back to God. Hallelujah. This morning. We should be praising God.

[9:45] For this great reversal. Not only that. But this great reversal. Is Christ. Defeating death. And rising from the grave.

Vanquishing his enemies. Showing his supreme power. So that we will finally say. One day. Death has been swallowed up in victory.

Where oh death is your victory. Where oh death is your sting. We are now awaiting. Full deliverance.

If we are a child of God. Christ is coming. We are not home yet. The champagne is on ice. To use the cliché.

Aren't we longing for that day. When there is total relief from our enemies. That we will have. The pure joy.

[10:43] Of rest. Of feasting. And joy with our saviour. The Lord Jesus Christ. And with each other. What a great redemption we have.

As we look back on the cross. And what a great redemption we have. As we look forward. To Christ coming back. What a deliverance.

What a reversal. This morning. Let us again be thankful. Of this wonderful news. Of Christ. Dying. For me. As the modern song says.

You split the sea. So I could ride. Walk. Right. Through it. My fears are drowned. In perfect love. You rescued me. So that I could stand and say.

I am. A child. Of God. I am. A child. Of God. Yes. I am. A child. Of God. My next point is the great rout.

[11:51] Rout is like a fight. A complete destruction. Of somebody. Something. This doesn't make for good reading.

Does it? When we read this chapter. The Jews beat their enemies decisively. But it's difficult. With all the killing. Isn't it? So. Firstly.

In Susa. As we see in the text. 500 men. Are killed. In verse 6. If you look at your Bibles. On the 13th.

Of Adar. And 300 men. Are killed on the 14th. In verse 15. This is probably because. Their enemies were still at large.

The king goes to Esther. Again. He says. Do you have anything else? Another request. He said. Yes. Can we have this edict enforced.

[12:52] On the 14th. Probably because there are more people. In the citadel of Susa. That are enemies. Of God's people. They need to be annihilated. They need to be destroyed. Otherwise.

The Jews will be destroyed. And. Secondly. In the other 127 provinces. Scattered. Across this huge empire.

75,000 enemies were killed. You see that in verse 16. I calculated that. As. Approximately. 591. Per province. A lot of people.

But they were the enemies. Of God's people. And. Thirdly. We see the 10 sons of Haman. Are publicly exposed. And humiliated. By being hung. On gallows. I've got a picture there. Now. This is open to interpretation. Because. Some commentators say.

[13:49] They could have been poles. Impaled on poles. But whatever. Method. It's a horrible. And humiliating. Way of dying. This is a complete victory.

For God's people. Undoubtedly. Christopher Ash. Writes. Before we get. Too squeamish. About this. We need to remember.

The political realities. Of the time. Imprisonment. Was a rare. An expensive option. It was simply. Not possible. To imprison. The numbers. Recorded. In the events. That follow. He goes on. To state. That Haman.

Was not the only. Jew hater. In the realm. The kingdom. There is a large group. Who wants to. Annihilate. God's people. They have.

[14:46] A ruthless. Hostility. To the covenant. People of God. God. That would have been. You and I. If we were living. That time. They had.

Nine. Months. To change. Their. Minds. From a. Jewish. Perspective. It's either. Their life. Or ours. If the.

If the enemies. Live. The Jews. Die. I've. Also. Read. That. If it were. The other way. Around. Far more Jews. Would have been killed.

If the first. Edict. Had succeeded. Interestingly. In the text. We hear of no Jewish casualties. Again. We might feel. Uncomfortable. With the decision. About impaling. Haman's sons. But we must remember. That the sons. Would have sided. With their father. Just as their father.

[15:41] Had shared. The ancient hostility. Against the covenant people. Going back to King Agag. And the Amalekites. Ash says.

The public impaling. Of the bodies. Of the sons of Haman. Sends a horrible. But unforgettable. Message. To the empire. That the world. Has been turned.

Upside down. Additionally. His sons. Too had the chance. To switch allegiances. But they refused. Did you notice. The repetition. Of how they destroyed. Their adversaries. Ash says. Again. It's doubtful. That God's. People.

All of them. Behaved. Exemplary. It was like. It was likely. That some. Vindictive. Revenge. Killings. Happened. By some of them. But three times.

[16:39] In this text. It's mentioned. That they didn't take the plunder. The possessions. From their enemies. You see that. In verse 10. Verse 15. And verse 16.

Verse 16. They did not.

Lay their hands. On their plunder. This chimes. With the holy wars. Many years beforehand. In Joshua's time. Where they didn't gain. The plunder for themselves. From their enemies. Defeats. They had every right. To take their possessions. Because the edict said so. But they didn't. We must remember. That this was a one-off event. It's not to be repeated. It was historically unique. Jesus taught. All who draw the sword. Will die by the sword. It is God's choice.

[17:36] And God's right. To repay. Hebrews 10. 30 said. It is mine to avenge. I will repay. Repay. So in application.

Let's pray for our brothers and sisters. Around the world. Who are being persecuted. Today. Today. For their faith. We are thinking of Nigeria. As an example.

There are people in Nigeria. Facing death for Christ. We had an email this week. From Roger. Let's pray for our brothers and sisters there. We are not in that position.

But so many of our family. Are under that pressure. Let's give glory to God. That all of his enemies will be defeated one day.

Isn't that great comfort? God is a God of justice. What a relief it will be. And if you are not a follower of Christ.

[18:41] Here this morning. There is a sentence hanging over your heads. Like the enemies of God. God does not take the pleasure in the death of the wicked.

He says in Ezekiel. But if a wicked person turns away. From the wickedness. They have committed. And does what is just and right. They will save their life.

Because they consider. All the offenses they have committed. And turn away from them. That person will surely live. They will not die. Do you see your wickedness before a holy God?

I ask you today. Do not harden your hearts. It's a foolish thing. To fight against God. Because you're going to lose. His hand of rescue.

Is open for you. Today. Deliverance is offered. Through Jesus Christ. Come to him for safety. Don't be like those enemies of God's people.

[19:48] Join in the fight for Jesus. Be on the victory side. So to conclude. This morning. What do you delight in the most?

This morning. What do you put all your efforts in? What drives you the most? Christ. Is it. That great rescue.

Is it. The fact that you have been rescued by Jesus Christ. Christ. I hope it is. Let's praise and worship him. For that great reversal.

Amen. Let's sing our last song. Salvation song. Love before the dawn of time.

Chosen by my maker. Hidden by my saviour. I am his. And he is mine. Cherish for eternity. When I'm stained with guilt and sin.

[20:48] He is there to lift me. Heal me and forgive me. Gives me strength. To stand again. Stronger than I was before. Let's sing salvation song.