

Through Mercy _Jewish Outreach with Brother Sam Wilson

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Date: 24 January 2021

[0 : 0 0] It is an honor and a delight to be here with you all. And I'm just thrilled to be here. And Pastor, thank you so much for letting us do this. And I'm excited about the conference that we've got going on, the Through Mercy Jewish Ministry Seminar.

It's designed for a couple of things. One is for all the missionaries to be able to learn how to reach out to the Jewish people in the fields that God sent them to. And the other one is for all of us who live in Atlanta to learn how to reach our Jewish neighbors for Jesus Christ.

This is not a quick work, reaching Jewish people. It's an incredibly important work. And it's not a work that the missionaries are going to get done. It's the work that each individual has to have a part in.

And so I'm so glad to have the opportunity to share these things with you guys to try to strengthen your hands and put tools in your hands to allow you to witness to your Jewish neighbors.

And by the way, most of them work for your not-Jewish neighbors just as well. And going out and witnessing to the Jew first and also to the Greek, taking the gospel to your neighbors, that God's name would be glorified, that the lost would be saved, and that God's church would be built up.

[1 : 0 9] And so that's very important. I am one of the many things that makes me excited about tonight is that I've got a couple of guests in the room that I'm very happy about. Where did you guys go? Stand up.

There. Oh, there's one. There's the other one. Okay. The gentleman in the suit is Abraham Tillman. And the gentleman in the striped sweater is Gino Malerba. I'm not even going to try to say your first name. We'll go with Gino.

And both of these young men are in process of preparing for ministry to the Jewish people with IBJM. And they've come to be here. I'm excited for them to see vision and for you to see them.

And thank you guys for being here. And Abraham actually gave testimony today, preached a little bit, and Gino will be doing the same later on this week. And we're excited about it. Open your Bibles, if you would, to the book of Esther.

The book of Esther. It turns out that next month is the Jewish Feast of Purim. The word Purim actually means lots, as in they cast lots. Because Haman cast lots to decide which day the Jewish people should all be destroyed on.

[2 : 1 0] And so they ended up naming the holiday Purim. I don't know why. And the holiday of Purim is what I want to preach to you about Purim today, which is in the scriptures.

It's not one of the holidays that God ordained that the Jewish people would all observe back in Leviticus. But it's one that came about throughout their history later on during the book of Esther when God wonderfully delivered them from the genocide that was planned for them by the Medo-Persian Empire under the leadership of Haman.

And so they are celebrating that. Now, the Jewish people have fun with Purim. Purim. Now, sometimes us Baptists don't have enough fun.

The Jewish people have some very solemn feasts. But they also sometimes just have a ball. And I think that's kind of a good idea. I like it. Purim is like that. It's a very joyous time. Sometimes it gets a little overjoyous.

There's a lot of feasting, rejoicing, giving gifts of food and drink. There's celebrations, parades. There's drinking too much of the things one ought not to drink. They all dress up in costumes.

[3 : 18] Well, not everybody. But many of the people go around dressed up in costumes. Whether they're going to church or synagogue or going off to school or work. They all be costumed up or wearing masks and carrying on. But at the synagogue, they have what they call a Purim spiel.

Which means usually kind of a raucous, disorganized, usually funny acting out of the whole story of Esther. I've been involved in them. And they are fun and a little bit crazy.

And the favorite treat. I brought some last year. The favorite treat for Purim is called hamantashen. Which means, well actually, technically it means Haman's pockets.

But that's, somebody thought it was rude. It used to be called Haman's ears. Because the idea was that Haman was a monster with all misshapen. And he had triangular ears. And so they have these triangular cookies that are really delicious.

And they call them Haman's ears. Except for now, it's more politically correct to call them Haman's pockets. But everybody still calls them Haman's ears. And everybody eats Haman's ears. And they're delicious.

[4 : 19] And that's part of the celebration. And so that's how Jewish people celebrate Purim today. But you might ask, and I think it would be a legitimate question, what do we care about how the Jewish people celebrate Purim?

Is that important to us? Well, it's interesting in that if I can use something from their culture to preach Christ to them, I will happily do that. And so I study what they believe and what they do as a way to get into their culture and to lovingly share Christ with them.

Now, in this message this evening, I want to talk to you about Purim, about Esther, and about what God's doing there. But really, I'm kind of like trying to preach a whole book that's 10 chapters long, which is probably a really bad idea.

So I thought about saying, you guys all know the story of Esther. And so I'm not even going to waste my time. I'm just going to go past that and go, but I thought, well, you know, probably not everybody knows the story of Esther. So put on your seatbelts.

I'm going to do the story of Esther. There are four primary characters. There is King Ahasuerus. He's very powerful, but I think he wasn't all that bright. There is Haman, who was like the prime minister. He was evil, wicked, and vengeful.

[5 : 27] Bad guy. Thirdly, there was a guy named Mordecai. Jewish man, devout, solid guy. And there was his cousin who he was raising because her parents probably had died.

And her name was Hadassah. But in Babylon, they changed it to a Persian name. Or in Persia, they changed it to a Persian name. And so we know her as Esther. And she was a beautiful and brave young woman.

And so those four people are the principal people in the story. So quickly, Haman gets really burned off with Mordecai because Mordecai won't bow down to him.

So he convinces the king that the Jews are really evil and convinces the king to proclaim genocide, to kill all of the Jews in the whole kingdom. And it's set up by the law of the Medes and the Persians, which means it cannot be changed.

It's an unchangeable law. And so this is not a good thing. When we say genocide, you say, well, how big a deal is that? This country stretched from India to Ethiopia.

[6 : 28] That was like the whole known world. That was probably all of the Jews that there were. And so they're going to kill them all on a date is set. But unbeknownst to them, the young, beautiful queen who has captured the king's heart is a Jewish lady, the cousin of Mordecai.

And she is the queen. So Mordecai calls to Esther and says, listen, you've got to do something. You've got to help. And he says to her, perhaps you are coming to the kingdom for such a time as this.

And she says, yeah, but the king hasn't called for me for some time. And if you go into the king and he hasn't called you, you get killed. And he says, well, you better go anyway. And she says, okay, I'll do it. If I perish, I perish. This is the short version, by the way.

So Esther goes into the king and she doesn't die. He accepts her. And she invites him to a banquet. So he goes to the banquet. She doesn't really do anything at the banquet, but she invites him to another banquet. And Haman also got invited to the banquet.

And he's really excited because I'm getting invited to the queen's banquets. And so he goes home and his great glee, he builds a 75-foot tall gallows to hang Mordecai on, having no idea that Mordecai is the cousin of Esther.

[7 : 35] That night, the king can't sleep. He's sleepless. He asks him to read the Chronicles of the Kingdom. They're reading the Chronicles of the Kingdom. And they remind him of something that Mordecai did long ago that was a wonderful benefit to the king. And he says, I had to reward him.

And at that moment, Haman walks into the room. And the king says, yo, Haman, what would you do to reward the man that the king delights in? And Haman thinks he's talking.

Oh, he wants to do something for me. So he comes up with this grandiose plan. And then the king says, go do that for Mordecai. And Haman is like, no, this ain't good. Next day, second banquet.

They come in. The queen finally says, king, there's somebody that's trying to kill all of my people. And my heart is broken. And the king's like, who would do that? And she goes, that wicked Haman.

And Haman's toast. King gets pretty upset. He steps out of the room a minute in his upsetness. And Haman decides to plead. And so he falls down at Esther's feet and begins to plead with her.

[8 : 33] King comes back in and thinks that Haman is trying to have his way with the queen. And they take Haman out. And they hang him on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Mordecai gets exalted into prime minister.

They cannot change the old law. But they can issue a new one saying the Jews can defend themselves, which they do very successfully. Great victories over the enemy. They decide to have a big party named Purim to celebrate it every year, which we will do on February the 25th and 6th.

Yes, it changes every year. But it's the 25th and 6th of February this year. And so they establish this great holiday where they will have a day of rest, feasting, gladness, presence, and charity.

And Mordecai lives happily ever after. So that is kind of the Reader's Digest, the condensed version of the story of Esther. And now we can get into other stuff. So, I mean, you needed another story, right?

Go to chapter 3. There are a couple of things that I want to bring out to note because you've heard, most of you are familiar with this story. And you've heard the story. And so I don't need to probably belabor that too much.

[9 : 42] But there are several things I want to talk to you about the story of Esther and of Purim that I think will be of interest to you. The first one that I want you to see is the dreadful anti-Semitism that's going on here.

Anti-Semitism is hatred for the Jewish people. And in chapter 3, verses 5 and 6, it says, And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did reverence, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath.

And he thought scorn to lay hands on Haman alone. He thought, ain't enough to just kill Haman. Wherefore, Haman, or just to kill Mordecai, And so the people had come to Haman and they said, Hey, there's a guy that's not bowing down to you.

And he's like, really? That ain't good. And he said, but not only that, he's a Jew. He's like, what? That Jew won't bow down to me?

I'll show him. Not only am I going to kill him, I will kill all of his people from India to Ethiopia. I wish this was the only time this happened.

[11 : 03] Genocide is one of the dirtiest words that exists in our language. And the Jewish people have experienced it over and over and over.

Pharaoh tried to kill them all in Egypt. Okay? The Assyrians tried to wipe them out. The Babylonians tried to wipe them out. Haman tries to wipe them out here. A little while later, and the Seleucid Empire is going to try to wipe them out.

Oh, and then the Roman Empire is going to almost wipe them out. Then you're going to have crusades when vast numbers of them were wiped out. Then you're going to have pogroms. You're going to have horrible persecutions in Europe.

You're going to have the Inquisition. Then the Nazis are going to try to wipe them out. Right now, the Iranians are promising to wipe them out. Here you have this little tiny people group.

I mean, they're tiny. Okay? I used to live in Moscow. There's 15 million people in Moscow. There are only 15 million Jewish people in the whole world. I lived in a city with that many people in it.

[12 : 03] It's a tiny little group of people. And yet, throughout their history, the great empires, the superpowers of the world, have dedicated themselves to the destruction of this one people.

There's a couple of questions here. Why? Why? Is there something so incredibly horrid about them that they must be wiped out?

No, there's really not. I mean, they're not. How do I say? They're rotten, but no more rotten than the rest of us. They're just like we are. Then why? I'm convinced I know the answer.

You see, Jeremiah 31 says that God loves Israel with an everlasting love. And I think the reverse of that is that whatever God loves with an everlasting love, Satan hates with an everlasting hatred.

And I believe that the explanation for anti-Semitism is that Satan constantly works in the hearts of evil people to stir them up against God's chosen people.

[13 : 13] I believe that anti-Semitism is Satanic. When I get in people in some of the countries that I visit, people get into long arguments about, you know, the Jews good or the Jews bad.

And what should we think about the Jews? And I'm like, guys, stop. It's really, really simple. God loves them. Satan hates them.

You decide whose side you're on. Because that's all there is to it. I mean, it really comes down to that. I'm not saying they're all perfect. They're not. Neither are we.

But I'm saying that that is the whole thing. Anti-Semitism is growing. I read today that in the last year, there were 2,100 acts of anti-Semitism in America.

Vandalism, harassment, 91 assaults, 5 deaths, an increase of 12% over the previous year, the most acts of anti-Semitism in America that had ever been recorded.

[14 : 14] It's on the grow, even here in America. That's horrible. And folks, there should be no place for it. Okay, so I'm going to leave that and go on to the next thing.

When people talk about Esther, one of the amazing things about the word Esther is that the word God is not in the book. You have a book in the Bible that doesn't talk about God. Okay? And yet his fingerprints and his footprints are all over the book.

He isn't named, but you see him everywhere you look. People, we often say that one of the key themes of Esther is God's sovereignty. What is sovereignty?

The sovereignty of God means he is king. He has the right and the power to decide what's going to happen. And when God decides, that's done.

God is going to do his will. God's will is going to take place. He's going to get it done. And you can depend on that. And we see this over and over. God, you know, the nation's rage.

[15 : 15] People are trying to make their thing happen. And God is like, fellas, you should have gotten up earlier in the morning because I already had this all worked out before you even started.

I've got this already. And we see this all through the book of Esther. We see that God had things planned. Oh, there's going to be a plot against the Jewish people. So before the plot begins, God puts a beautiful young Jewish queen right up next to the king.

God, the person who's going to be instrumental in saving the Jews is there before the threat comes up. God said, threat's coming. Got a plan. God was ahead of it.

And you see it elsewhere. You see it. And it's humorous. You can't help but laugh. Okay. Haman comes into the room and the king says, what should you do for the guy that the king wants to honor?

How could I really honor someone? And Haman's got this. Who would he want to honor but me? Yeah. And so he starts drawing this huge big picture.

[16 : 20] And the king says, okay, go do that for your enemy. And you're like, God had this all organized.

And it's beautiful. It's just wonderful. Okay. Haman's out there. I'm going to build a gallows to hang that rotten Mordecai. I'm going to make it 75 feet high so everybody will see.

The next day, Haman is swinging from that rope on the gallows. See, God is sovereign. God is wise. God is all powerful.

And when we fight against God, we are spitting in the wind. Okay. It's just not going to work. Because he is God. And you might just as well surrender and go along with him.

Because it's just not going to work going against him. Because he's God. And I love the beauty of that. But can I say something? A lot of times, we wrestle with this tension between divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

[17 : 24] Oh, my. Wars have been fought. And great volumes have been written about the theological difficulties of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. I personally kind of like what Mr. Spurgeon said about it.

They asked him once if he could find a way to reconcile divine sovereignty and human responsibility. And he said, I wouldn't try. I try never to reconcile friends. He said, you don't need to reconcile them.

They're not enemies. They're not against each other. Both are important. Both are necessary. And you see that in the book of Esther. You see the great importance of God planting the solution there before the problem arises.

You see everywhere you look, you see that God has arranged this for his glory. And yet, at the same time, you see a young lady. Her cousin says, perhaps you've come to the kingdom for such a time as this.

She's like, I could die in there. A bloody, terrible death. And he's like, yeah. You have to make a decision. In chapter 4, verse 8.

[18 : 45] And he also gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them. To show it unto Esther and to declare it unto her and to charge her that she should go into the king to make supplication unto him.

And to make requests before him for her people. So Mordecai here is saying, you've got to go in there. And she responds and she says in verse 11. All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces do know that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come into the king into the inner court.

Who is not called. There is one law of his. To put him to death. Except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden scepter that he may live. But I have not been called to come in unto the king these 30 days.

Verse 13. And Mordecai answers her and says, think not with thyself that thou shall escape in the king's house more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then there shall enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place.

But thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed. And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this. She was put in a place where she had to make a decision.

[20 : 00] She had to act. And you know, the sovereignty of God is real. But our responsibility is real. God has put us in a position where we have to act.

Maybe that's getting up and going to church. Maybe it's doing your devotions in the morning. Maybe it's going and talking to your neighbor about Jesus Christ. There are a lot of things.

But God has called upon us to make, to act. And that act is only going to be made through faith. When we do it any other way, it doesn't really work out right.

Look at what Esther said. Go down to verse 16. She says, go gather all the Jews that are present in the Shushan. That's the city where they lived. And fast ye for me. And neither eat nor drink three days, night or day.

I also and my maidens will fast likewise. She said, let's go ask God for help. We need God's help. So will I go in unto the king.

[21 : 04] Which is not according to the law. And if I perish, I perish. This young lady, because she was a very young girl.

Realizes that God has put this responsibility upon her. And she says, let's pray. Let's fast. And trusting God, I'll go in.

I don't know how it'll turn out. Maybe I die. But I have to go. You know, we all face those kinds of situations.

Where we're called upon to do something and maybe it's hard. And maybe it's terrifying. I think of some of the families that are getting ready to leave and go overseas. That's a big step.

Think about a lot of moms and dads and grandmas and grandpas that are going to say goodbye to those kids that are going to leave and go overseas. I think that's the harder step. But just in our everyday lives.

[22 : 15] We face things that are hard. And we have to make a decision. See, God's sovereignty was fully at work. But a person had to go forth and take a step of faith.

And I think that it's really beautiful when we see the beauty of how God works that out together.

That God's sovereignty and human responsibility work together to bring about the right result. Too many theologians want to grab one of those and ride it and leave the other behind.

And that never works. I want to talk to you about salvation in the book of Esther. You see, if we go back here, we can go back into the earlier chapters and we can read about how they made a decree.

Chapter 3, verse 10. The king took his ring from his hand and gave it unto Haman, the son of Hamadath, the Agagite, the Jew's enemy. He said, the silver is given to thee. The people also to do with them as seemeth good to thee.

[23 : 22] And they called in the scribes. And it says, and it was written and it was sealed with a king's ring. And verse 13 says, the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces to destroy, to kill, to cause to perish.

All Jews, both young and old, little children and women in one day, even upon the 13th day of the 12th month, which is the month of Adar. And take the spoil of them for a prey. It was done according to the law of the Medes and the Persians.

An unchangeable decree went out that they would die. That's pretty bad. You know, it reminds me of an unchangeable decree that has gone out against the Jews and the Gentiles as well in our day.

In Romans chapter 3, verse 9, it's really, it's talking about the Jewish people. It says, what then? Are we better than they? No, and no wise.

For we have before proved, that's Romans 3, 9. For we have before proved, both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin. As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one.

[24 : 33] There is none that understandeth. There is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way. They are together become unprofitable. There is none that doeth good, no, not one. And he goes on throughout chapter 3 and he says, both the Gentiles and the Jews are sinners, are condemned.

There is an unchangeable decree written against them, a decree of death because of their sin. You know, one of the hard things about being a Jew, a missionary to the Jewish people is that it's hard to convince people that you should really care about the Jewish people.

I mean, you know, if I could get up here and show you pictures of people who were starving to death who lived in little huts, then your heartstrings would be torn. And you would really say, oh, we have to do something to help them.

But if you say, well, the Jewish people and the stereotype is, isn't that a bunch of rich people that live in downtown Atlanta? And there are rich Jewish people that live there.

By the way, there are also poor Jewish people that live in the Atlanta area as well. Not all of them are rich and happy and successful. But they're not the kind of people that call forth a great deal of sympathy.

[25 : 54] Okay, they look like they're doing very well and why, you know, that doesn't really cause us to be terribly sympathetic. Some people hate them. Now, most people don't think about them either way.

Some hate them. Some envy them. Very few of them see them as God does. Very few are willing to see them as people who have an unchangeable decree written against them, a decree of death.

And they have no hope. They have no way of being delivered. You know, I often talk to you about Romans 1.16, where it talks about the gospel being to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

But did you know there are other verses that talk about the Jew first and also to the Greek? Like Romans 2.9. It says, You know, it's not just the gospel that's to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

It's also judgment for sin is to the Jew first and also to the Greek. But we don't see them as people with an unchangeable decree of death hanging over their heads.

[27 : 12] We don't see them as God sees them and we don't have the compassion for them that we ought to. I beg of you. Don't look at the car that they drive.

It's probably nicer than my car. Okay, your car is probably nicer than my car. Look at their souls. Don't realize that there are people who are broken who need a Savior.

You know, so we see the Jews' plight. People that have a decree against them. But you know what else we see? We see that God prepared a way of salvation. God arranged for their salvation to be there.

Now, their salvation in that particular plight back in that day was the Queen. But God has prepared a way of salvation for them today. And that is the Messiah.

The long-promised Messiah that God sent from heaven. According to all the prophecies of the prophets. Sent a Messiah to come to be born as a baby in Bethlehem, according to Micah 5.2.

[28 : 15] To grow up living a sinless life. And to give himself on a cross. As the ultimate sacrifice. Giving himself to pay for their sins. And for ours.

That God made an arrangement for their salvation. So they had an unchangeable decree. But they also have. God has arranged for their salvation. And you know what?

Back in the day of Esther. Someone had to find the faith. To take a scary step.

And ask a king. For deliverance. And in our day. There's the decree. There's salvation that's been provided.

But there's the need for us to take the step. It's need for the Jewish people to take that step of faith. And go to the king and say. Please save me.

[29 : 14] Please forgive me. Because of the blood of Jesus the Messiah. Hebrews 10.22 says. Let us draw nigh near with a true heart.

In full assurance of faith. Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience. And our bodies washed with pure water. Hebrews is saying. To the Jewish people. Because we have Jesus.

Let us draw nigh unto God. Let's come to him. Let's come boldly to his throne room. With a heart full of assurance. Because by grace. He will receive us.

And so. Salvation is there. In the book that never mentions God. We can find salvation. An allegory of salvation there. Through their need. Through the provision. Through the step of faith.

That we can use to describe to them. How a person can be saved today. Just as the people of Israel were saved back in that day. I'm probably mixing up all my metaphors here.

[30 : 13] But. Let me say this to you. There are Jewish people that live here. Three synagogues within 20 minutes of where we stand today.

160,000 Jewish people here. You have neighbors who are Jewish. You might not know them. But you do have neighbors that are Jewish. You can't not in Atlanta. I wonder if.

You have come to the kingdom for such a time as this. I wonder if God has put you in this time and place. To be a light to that Jewish neighbor.

Say well brother Sam knows all about talking to Jewish people. Yeah but your neighbor isn't going to listen to me. But he'll listen to you. And I wonder if maybe God.

Has brought you to the kingdom. Has brought you to the situation. To live in the place where you live. To have the neighbors that you have. Jew or Gentile. And you.

[31 : 17] Are the one. Maybe the only one. Who has the opportunity to preach Christ to them. And you might be saying. I don't know. I'm not really very comfortable doing that.

I'm kind of scared to do that. You know what Esther did. She fasted and prayed. And then she sucked up her faith. And said I will go in. And maybe God's calling you to do the same tonight.

Let's all stand. So many things here.

We look at this book. And we just want to. Praise our God. How great he is. And we think about the needs of the Jewish people. They're perishing.

And they need Christ. I'm so excited to be at Vision. And be able to talk to missionaries. Who are going to go out. Around the world. To places. Where there are Jewish souls that need Christ.

[32 : 20] But I'm just excited to talk to people. Who aren't going to go around the world. Have a chance to stay here. And witness to Jewish people that need Christ. Father. Father.

I come to you now. Father. I pray that. First of all. We'd look at this story. And that our hearts would thrill.

That we would thrill to see. What you do. How great you are. Lord. The kingdoms of the earth. Lord.

They cannot stand before you. And we rejoice in that. And yet in Esther. We also remember that. We have a responsibility.

And there are lost people all around us. Jewish lost people. Gentile lost people. They all need. They all need Christ.

[33 : 22] And Lord. Tonight. As we think about the example of Esther. We think about our responsibility. And what you'd have us to do. Heavenly Father.

I pray that you'd speak to our hearts. Lord. Help us to rejoice in the greatness of our God. But help us to remember that it doesn't end with you.

That it becomes very personal to us. Will we obey you? Will we take the steps of faith that we need to take? And Lord.

Help us to say yes to you. Father. We pray your blessing upon each one tonight. In Jesus name. Amen. I think we have a song.

We invite you to come. If God's speaking to your heart. We just invite you to come. Kneel down here. Meet with the Lord. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[34 : 20] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.