

Against Antisemitism (Auschwitz)

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Sermon Synopsis

In the sobering shadow of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the memorial of the Holocaust's victims, Dr Wilson shares a bold and unyielding message Against Anti-Semitism. Here, over one million lives were lost in the gas chambers and crematoriums, the vast majority being Jewish. With the railway tracks and infamous gates as silent witnesses, Dr Wilson calls upon the Christian community to embrace an unwavering commitment to stand against all manifestations of anti-Semitism. Invoking Genesis 12:1-3, he emphasizes the divine promise to Abraham, underscoring the everlasting command to bless the children of Abraham and thus be blessed, and a stern warning that cursing them shall incur a curse.

The narrative journeys through the historical context of anti-Semitism in Nazi ideology, to the state-sanctioned discrimination preceding the Holocaust. The horrors of Kristallnacht are revisited, marking the night when Jewish suffering began in earnest through the destruction their businesses, synagogues, and homes, climaxing in the mass imprisonment of Jewish men. The sermon recounts the ominous Wannsee Conference, where the 'Final Solution'—industrial-scale genocide—was conceived. Amidst the harrowing recount, an Auschwitz guide takes the audience on a walk through Auschwitz Birkenau, painting a vivid picture of the systematic judgment, dehumanization, and extermination of Jews who arrived at this epicenter of human tragedy.

Shifting to the present, the sermon emphasizes the alarming resurgence of anti-Semitism, contending that it is not confined to the past but a growing menace across the globe. With a call for vigilance and action, the preacher encourages the Christian community to actively oppose this ancient hatred. The depths of this evil are explored through the lens of Scripture, from Pharaoh's decree to Herod's massacre, culminating in the Holocaust's unfathomable toll. The sermon denounces not only the heinous acts but also the complicity and historical precedents set by figures like Martin Luther, whose later writings fueled anti-Semitic fervor.

Dr Wilson unpacks two erroneous approaches towards Jews within Christianity: replacement theology, which erroneously claims the Church supersedes God's promises to Israel, and the unnecessary Judaization of Gentile believers. The sermon dismantles these extremes by illustrating the eternal nature of God's covenant with the Jewish people and the fulfillment of the Law in Jesus Christ. This explanation reinforces the crux of Christian faith—that one is justified through faith, not by adhering to the Mosaic Law—and asserts that the salvation narrative includes, rather than excludes, God's intent for the Jews.

In conclusion, this powerful sermon from Auschwitz Birkenau calls us to express the love of Christ by opposing anti-Semitism and honoring God's eternal covenant with the Jewish people. The preacher reaffirms the Christian's duty to bless the descendants of Abraham, reject harmful theologies, and live by the grace found in the Gospel. With a heart extended towards God's chosen, the sermon implores believers to love the Jewish people and oppose the enduring specter of anti-Semitism, thereby upholding the values at the heart of the Christian faith.

Sermon Highlights

- We are called to stand against anti-Semitism in all its forms, acknowledging its horrific peak at Auschwitz Birkenau, where over a million lives, mostly Jewish, were brutally taken. As followers of Christ, we must love and bless the children of Abraham, ensuring that we do not partake in cursing them.
- Genesis 12:1-3 serves as a pivotal basis for our responsibility to the Jewish people, emphasizing God's promise to Abraham that his descendants would be a channel of blessing to the world, and in turn, those who bless them will be blessed, and those who curse them will be cursed.
- Rejecting anti-Semitism is not only a call to action but an active stance against a growing global problem. With Jewish people being targets of a disproportionate number of hate crimes, our vigilance in love and support must be unwavering.
- We must avoid extremes in theology and practice: both replacement theology that invalidates God's ongoing promises to the Jewish people, and the erroneous adoption of Jewish law by gentile believers, which undermines the fulfillment of the law accomplished by Jesus Christ.
- Christians must find the balance between acknowledging and celebrating the Jewish roots of our faith while understanding and embracing the liberty and the reality that we have in Jesus Christ, the ultimate and perfect fulfillment of the law and the prophets.

Scripture Verses

Genesis 12:1-3

The LORD had said to Abram, 'Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.'

Romans 11:1

I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin.

Romans 11:11-12

Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring!

Galatians 4:9-10

But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? You are observing special days and months and seasons and years!

Colossians 2:16-17

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

Hebrews 10:1

The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship.

Galatians 3:8-9

Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you.' So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

Galatians 3:10-14

For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.' Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because 'the righteous will live by faith.' The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, 'The person who does these things will live by them.' Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.' He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

Quotes

- "The railroad tracks and gate behind me are where prisoners would be brought from literally around Europe. Most of them Jews to their execution here in the gas chamber and the crematorium." – Dr. Billy Wilson
- "The gas chambers at Auschwitz could kill thousands of people daily. After the victims were gassed, their bodies were looted for gold teeth or jewelry then burned in crematoria, erasing physical evidence of the massacre." - Dr. Billy Wilson
- "I'm gonna challenge you to live as Jesus would and love his people; to bless the children of Abraham. So you'll be blessed. And don't curse them, lest you be cursed!" - Dr. Billy Wilson
- "We stand against all forms of anti-Semitism; all prejudice against the Jew in any way. We stand against it. We declare it is wrong and we declare God's curse against it." - Dr. Billy Wilson

Bible Study

Objectives

- Understand the biblical promise to Abraham and the significance of blessing Israel.
- Recognize the evils of anti-Semitism and its historical impact on the Jewish people.
- Learn practical ways to stand against anti-Semitism in daily life.
- Reflect on the Christian responsibility towards the Jewish people.

Reading and Reflections

- Genesis 12:1-3 – The promise of God to Abraham.
- Romans 11:1-2, 11-12 – The enduring relationship between God and the Jewish people.
- Galatians 3:8-9, 10-14 – The blessing of Abraham extended to all through faith in Christ.

Key Observations

- God's covenant with Abraham included a universal blessing and a warning against cursing his descendants.
- Historically, anti-Semitism has emerged in various societies when, in choosing someone to blame for more complicated issues, their hearts embrace hatred for the Jews. This hate reached a horrific peak during the Holocaust.
- The Christian community has at times contributed to anti-Semitism, which must be acknowledged and rectified.
- Replacement theology is erroneous in neglecting God's ongoing plans for Israel.

Personal Reflections

- Consider how the history of anti-Semitism has influenced your understanding of Jewish-Christian relations.
- Think about how social media actively fans any spark of division between people. Rather than seeking to understand, the algorithm divides us. Consider how this environment might cause you to fall into strife with your neighbor – and into division with the Jewish people.
- Reflect on how embracing the biblical view of the Jewish people can transform attitudes and actions.
- Contemplate how knowledge of the Holocaust impacts your responsibility to stand up against hatred in all its forms.

Lessons for Daily Life

- The church should honor God's promises to Israel while recognizing the fulfillment found in Jesus.

- A believer's identity is found in Christ, without the need to adopt Jewish customs for salvation.
- Anti-Semitism is a violation of God's command to love and has no place in a believer's heart.

Practical Applications

- Educate oneself and others about the Jewish roots of the Christian faith.
- Stand up against anti-Semitic language, jokes, and stereotypes in your community.
- Support organizations that promote understanding and reconciliation between Christians and Jews.
- Advocate for the protection of Jewish communities facing discrimination.

Challenges for the Week

- Identify and dismiss any replacement theology notions you may hold consciously or unconsciously.
- Research and share a story of a Holocaust survivor to honor their memory and teach others.
- Initiate a dialogue about the importance of combating anti-Semitism in your home, church, or social group.

Further Study

- Study the history of Jewish-Christian relations to gain a deeper understanding.
- Read about the lives of significant Jewish figures in the Bible and their impact on our faith.
- Explore the current state of anti-Semitism globally and understand how to be an effective ally.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before You with hearts heavy from the knowledge of the suffering endured by Your chosen people. We ask for forgiveness where we have faltered and for the strength to stand firmly against anti-Semitism. Guide us to be bearers of Your love and promoters of Your truth. Help us to reflect Your heart towards the children of Abraham and to uphold the promise You made to bless those who bless them. As we delve deeper into the lessons of this study, may we emerge as champions of justice and peace—both for our Jewish brothers and sisters and for all Your creation. In Jesus' mighty name, Amen.

Daily Devotionals

Day 1: Recognizing and Standing Against Anti-Semitism

Scripture Verse

Genesis 12:1-3 - 'The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Reflection

Brethren, we embark upon our reflection today by turning our gaze to the heart-wrenching history of the Holocaust, a time when darkness seemed to engulf humanity. Yet amidst these shadows of despair, God's eternal promise to Abraham shines undiminished, illustrating His unfailing covenant with His chosen people, the Jews. As you stand at the threshold of today, I urge you to consider the perils of anti-Semitism. This is not a passive stance, but an active resistance against an evil that once culminated in the loss of millions of Jewish lives at Auschwitz Birkenau. Reflect on the people you encounter daily. Consider the words spoken, the narratives entertained about Jewish individuals or Israel as a nation. Have these been in line with God's directive to bless and not curse Abraham's descendants? As a true believer, it is your duty to embody Christ's love, to offer love and support where hatred seeks to take root. Share this conviction; let your life serve as a testament against prejudice and a beacon of the love that Christ has for all of God's children.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, instill in me the courage and wisdom to stand firmly against the spirit of anti-Semitism. Empower me to extend Your blessings to the descendants of Abraham, honoring Your promise to them. Amen.

Day 2: Understanding Our Position in Christ

Scripture Verse

Galatians 3:28-29 - 'There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.'

Reflection

My fellow believer, as you step into this day, let the profound truth of unity in Christ resonate within your spirit. Galatians 3:28-29 breaks the chains of division, proclaiming that in Jesus, we are all one. The barriers that once separated Jew from Gentile are dismantled at the cross. Today, our reflection is set upon this foundation: we are Abraham's seed by faith and heirs of God's everlasting promise. As you meditate on this truth, I challenge you to look beyond the physical distinctions that the world accentuates. Our identity in Christ supersedes all earthly divisions. As you confront the tendencies of exclusion in your own life, whether subtle or overt, remember that the love of Christ compels us to be agents of unity and peace. Maintain vigilance against any remnants of prejudice that may seek to sow discord among God's people. Embrace your fellow heirs of the promise, regardless of their lineage, for in doing so, you align with the heart of Christ.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, fortify my heart with Your love so that I may see beyond earthly distinctions and embrace my brothers and sisters as co-heirs of Your divine promise. Amen.

Day 3: Living as Agents of Blessing

Scripture Verse

Matthew 5:44 - 'But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.'

Reflection

On this day, the command of our Savior in Matthew 5:44 calls us to a higher standard of living. To love and pray for those who oppose us is not a mere suggestion but an imperative that demands our compliance. Reflect on the reality of the Jewish people, who have faced persecution across the ages, and even now continue to confront waves of anti-Semitism. They are not our enemies; yet, even if they were, we are compelled to love. How much more, then, ought we to protect and bless them? As you navigate through today's interactions, consider how you can be an agent of Jesus' love and blessing to all people, especially the Jewish community. Whether it be through advocacy, education, or prayer, take tangible steps to cast off the shackles of hatred and bring forth the light of Christ's love. Be vigilant, be active, and remember that through your actions, you can help prevent history's darkest chapters from repeating themselves.

Prayer

Almighty God, enable me to be a vessel of Your unwavering love and grace. Teach me to love as You do, breaking the chains of enmity, and being an ambassador of Your blessing to all. Amen.

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