

Sermon Title: Why Pray For Israel, October 15, 2010 (Scripture is from ESV)

Introduction

Tonight's message is on a subject that God has been stirring in my heart for a few years now. I have wanted to bring it up during past Friday Fire prayer meetings but never felt God releasing me to share about it. But I feel now is the time. In fact, when Stephen Hanson and his partner Kimberly from IHOP came and visited our church one of their prophecies over me had to do with what I will share tonight. And when Stephen spoke during the Friday Fire he gave an intense message of prophecy about our church and then focused the second half of his message all on this topic. If you can't remember his message then I suggest listening to the podcast (iTunes search for: "New Philadelphia Church 2010").

I believe that this message will be the first of a series I will give on this subject. This is simply an introduction and I know God is going to release more revelation to me and to the church as we continue to seek Him. I believe this is going to be one of the most important subjects I will speak on during my life and that the revelation of this subject is critical not just for me but for New Philadelphia Church as well. I pray that the whole worldwide church will receive these revelations, but for us I feel it is critical. And with that said, I feel it is important to say a prayer before getting into it...

****Pray**** (Ask for revelation, declare covering over the church and the podcast)

The Power of God's Love

Before I reveal the sermon title and the subject God has put on my heart, we first need to do some reflecting on God's love. 1John 3:1 says, "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God." 1Corinthians 13:8 says in the NIV, "Love never fails." In the ESV the same verse reads, "Love never ends." The Message translation reads, "Love never dies." Please reflect on those words for a moment... "Love never fails. Love never ends. Love never dies."

To be honest, we can only understand God's love through revelation from the Holy Spirit. Let me read and pray Ephesians 3:14-19 over you...

Ephesians 3:14-19 – For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

God's Love is Immeasurable and Transcends Time

God's love surpasses knowledge. You might think you know His love, but the truth is you will never be able to fully grasp His love because it never ends. His love cannot be measured. His love transcends time.

Reflect on that for a moment: God's love transcends time.

Psalms 139:16 – Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

God loved us before we were ever created. *His love transcends time.*

Romans 5:8 – But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

God knew all the wrong we would do before we were ever born. Jesus knew not just the rejection He would receive while He was here on earth, but also the rejection He would later receive from every generation after. Yet despite all this foreknowledge, He chose to love us and to die for us. God's love is amazing. His love never fails and it never ends. He will always love us. He has loved us from before time and He will continue to love us through eternity. While our earthly love is often circumstantial and affected by our emotions, His love is always strong and passionate for us. Once again, His love never fails.

Now let's think about the love that we possess. **If I truly loved someone, then I would still care for them even after they pass away.** And if I knew that they had a close relative or friend that they cared for, then I would want to care for that relative or friend out of my love for the one I had lost. So if I were to happen upon a child who was related to the friend I loved, I would want to bless that child out of my love for that friend.

This is much like King David wanting to bless his deceased friend Jonathan's crippled son Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth was from the direct line of King Saul, which would normally make him an enemy or threat to any new king. Mephibosheth was also a cripple, causing him to be an outcast. But David disregarded these things because of his love for Jonathan. He chose to always care for Mephibosheth as long as he was alive. That is love!

But while King David's love could only last as long as he was alive, **God's love transcends time, never stops, and is never taken away.** While I may love my friends and in turn show love and favor to their children and perhaps even their grandchildren, at some point my time is going to come and I'll be taken from this world. But God's love keeps going. It doesn't stop at the grandchildren or the great-grandchildren. In Exodus 34:6-7 God Himself speaks and reveals His character...

Exodus 34:6-7 – The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, **keeping steadfast love for thousands,** forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.

Exodus 20:5-6 – You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, **but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me** and keep my commandments.

God clearly states in both of these passages that His love follows our descendants for thousands of generations after us. **Thousands of generations!** In other words, His love follows our descendants forever!

Please repeat after me, "**God loves me.**" And now repeat this, "**God loves my descendants for thousands of generations.**"

For proof of this, look at King David in the Bible. God clearly loved this man. If you read through 1Kings and 2Kings many of David's descendants disobeyed God and committed many atrocities. But throughout the stories God refuses to let David's descendants be destroyed because of His love for David. This love continues to the point that hundreds of years later David's descendant is treated with honor after being taken to Babylon in exile (2Kings 25). And we all know that Jesus is from the line of David as a result of the covenant God made with David nearly a thousand years earlier.

Think about the fact that in a thousand years God will still look upon your descendants and remember you. Your descendants, no matter how good they are or how sinful they are, 1,000 years from now will still have a special measure of favor on their lives as a result of your relationship with God. That is how great God's love is! God's love never fails.

The Power of Covenant

So now that we have established the truth that God's love follows our descendants for eternity, we can begin the message. Please turn with me to Genesis 12:1-3. The title of this message is, "**Why Pray For Israel.**"

Genesis 12:1-3 – Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

Abraham was the father of the Jewish people. God chose Isaac and then Jacob after him and it was then through all of Jacob's descendants that the Israelites came about. God's love was so strong for Abraham that even those that God rejected or turned from God: Lot, Ishmael, and Esau were provided for and their descendants grew into mighty nations. Despite their own failures, they were still connected to Abraham and God could not withhold blessing and favor from them. But for the Israelites, God's Sovereign choice, He continually loved. Even when the whole nation sinned in horrible ways, because of God's covenant with Abraham and His love for that man, God would not destroy the people. He brought them into the promised land and continued to speak to them and guide them despite the wickedness of their leaders.

God's love continued to prove true to a people who continually rejected Him. His promise and covenant with Abraham would not be nullified. **When God looks upon the Jewish people, the direct descendants of Abraham, God still sees His friend Abraham and remembers the covenant and promises He made to him.**

Covenant Not Broken But Fulfilled

There are some Bible teachers who preach a so called, "replacement theology." This is a teaching that basically states that the Christian church has replaced Israel. That God's promises in the Old Testament for Israel are actually for the church and not for the descendants of Abraham. Replacement theology teachers will say that God has rejected Israel. **This lie must be dispelled.** Please turn your Bible to Psalm 89...

Psalm 89:30-37 – If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my rules, if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments, then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes, but I will not remove from him my steadfast love or be false to my faithfulness. **I will not violate my covenant or alter the**

word that went forth from my lips. Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. His offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me. Like the moon it shall be established forever, a faithful witness in the skies.

God promises that **He will not** violate His covenant or change the promises He made. **He will not** remove His steadfast love.

Romans 11:1 – I ask then, has God rejected His people? By no means!

God has not rejected the Jews. We must understand this. Jesus' 12 disciples were all Jews. The apostle Paul and all our other forefathers of Christianity were also Jews. Paul's heart was fully for the Jewish people and longed to see them all saved. **In Romans 9:3 Paul even wished himself accursed that his Jewish brethren might be saved.** And we have to understand that any person's ability to love, including Paul's, is originated from God's love. Paul was reflecting God's heart for His people.

Sadly not all Jews believed in Jesus. While multitudes were saved, many others rejected Jesus as the Messiah. But does their unbelief nullify the covenant God made with Abraham? Does their lack of faith cause God to remove His love from them? Of course not! God will not violate the words of the His covenant with Abraham. God will not withhold his steadfast love to Abraham's descendants. The favor and blessing remains.

God's Favor On Them

The Old Testament is filled with promises from God towards the people of Israel. Isaiah 61, a chapter that includes our church's vision statement, is actually devoted to the restoration of Israel. In fact, most of Isaiah 40 – 66 is about Israel's restoration. Isaiah 66:8 has this unique promise...

Isaiah 66:8 – Shall a land be born in one day? Shall a nation be brought forth in one moment? For as soon as Zion was in labor she brought forth her children.

Did you know that the nation of Israel was in fact born in one day? On May 14, 1948 Britain ceded its land in the Middle East over to the Jewish people, establishing the nation of Israel. **In one day** the nation was established. And the land given to them by the British was the same land, boundaries and all, promised by God to the Jews in the Old Testament.

Listen to some of these facts and please determine for yourself if God is still invested in the Jewish people. The worldwide population of Jews is about 13.3 million. Jews make up just 0.2% of the world population. 0.2%! Yet despite being such a small group of people, they are continually in the news and stand out in the media, in science, and the arts. Here are just a few famous Jews you may have heard of: Albert Einstein, Milton Hershey of Hershey Chocolates, Michael Dell of Dell computers, Alan Greenspan, Jerry Seinfeld, Ben Stiller, Calvin Klein, Ralph Lauren, and Levi Strauss who invented blue jeans. Here is a list of some Hollywood movie directors who are Jewish: Steven Spielberg, Stanley Kubrick, Oliver Stone, Mel Brooks, and Woody Allen. There are plenty more famous Jews in many different fields, particularly science. And remember, they are just 0.2% of the world population!

Despite being so small, they received their own nation after World War 2 when Britain ceded their land in the Middle East. Despite Israel's population being less than a sixth of South Korea's at just under 8 million people, they have one of the greatest militaries in the world. Despite the constant threat of terrorist attack, the nation of Israel continues to flourish.

And so I ask you, “Has God removed His love and favor from Israel? Are they to be considered like any other non believing ethnic group? Is there nothing special about them?”

Satan’s Attack

I will tell you of one who knows that God’s love is still for Israel, and his name is Satan. From the beginning of Christianity Satan has stirred up false teaching and persecution towards the Jews among the Christians. The emperor Constantine in 325A.D. hated the Jews and abolished their feasts and traditions. The Christians turned from Paul’s heart of yearning for the salvation of the Jews and instead began to persecute and even kill Jews, blaming them for Jesus’ death. Is it a coincidence that the amazing moves of the Spirit suddenly seized at about this time and the world fell into the dark ages?

During the dark ages the Christian church commissioned the Crusades that slaughtered about 1/3 of the Jewish population in France and Germany. These soldiers then went to Jerusalem and slaughtered the Jews and set their synagogue on fire with many Jews locked inside. Is it a coincidence that there was little revelation within the Christian church during this extended time frame?

The Spanish Inquisition began in 1481 and Jews were systematically tortured, their possessions taken from them, and then they were either converted, forced to leave the country, or were executed. Thousands upon tens of thousands of Jews were burned alive during the inquisition.

Sadly, anti-Semitism, or hatred of the Jews, even infected the great Christian church leader Martin Luther. During the latter portion of his life he began to focus on preaching against the Jews and encouraging their persecution. During these latter years of his life Martin Luther became very sick and his body was wrecked with different ailments before he finally died. Is it a coincidence that Martin Luther’s body began to break down when he began to attack the Jewish people?

Martin Luther’s teaching would actually influence a one, Adolf Hitler. Hitler used Luther’s teachings against the Jews and the past anti-Semitic Roman Catholic policies to shape his teachings in the Third Reich and justify the persecution of the Jews. As we all know, millions of Jews would be slaughtered in the holocaust and millions others would be persecuted, displaced, and lose everything.

I have only shared a few bits of history of the persecution the Jews have received from so-called Christians. I have not even mentioned the persecution of the Muslims and of other ethnic groups. Over history **the Jews have clearly been the most persecuted people group in the world**. Can you name any other people group that has faced ethnic cleansing time after time after time? Is this all just coincidence? Satan is clearly bent upon their destruction. He knows God’s love for them. He knows God’s promises for them. Ever since God made His covenant with Abraham Satan has known of God’s Sovereign choice of Israel. And ever since the Israelites were in Egypt Satan has been trying to exterminate them from the earth. Satan wants to destroy the apple of God’s eye.

Why Pray?

As I stated at the beginning of this message, Stephen Hanson from IHOP visited us and spoke at a Friday Fire. It happened to be the last Friday Fire of the 21 day fast. He spoke an intense

word of prophecy over our church for the first half of the message. But for the latter half he focused his message on Israel. Let me speak out these quotes...

“God wants to bring us into understanding of his covenant and love for Israel. We must align ourselves with who God is, God’s will, and who God chooses. The greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart, mind, and soul and **“By agreeing with what God has chosen and what God has determined is loving Him.”** God’s heart is for restoring all things, and this is the ministry of Israel! God is asking, “Who will stand with my people?” Whoever stands for Israel or joins themselves with the Jews **will be persecuted**. Our religious obligation or sympathy will not be what keeps us with them, it will be true love that will do it.

Church, why should we pray for Israel? By praying for Israel we are able to know God’s heart and God’s love more deeply. As we pray for this nation we are able to receive a deeper revelation of God’s love that transcends time. By praying for Israel we are able to agree with what God has chosen and claim that He is the true God of restoration.

I want to close this message by having us look at three passages in the Bible that have stood out to me recently. Please turn to Matthew 24:27...

Matthew 24:27 – For as lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

The lightning symbolizes the move of the Spirit of God. And we see that his Spirit is moving from the east to the west. After Jesus was resurrected the Gospel began to move through Northern Africa and Southern Europe, going west from Israel. When Paul attempted to go to Asia he was stopped and not allowed. The Gospel has continued to move through America during the Great Awakening and down through South America. We are now seeing the bn n move towards Israel. There is a reason why the term, “Go west, young man” is often thrown around among Christians. The Spirit of God moves westward. Now turn to Ezekiel 43...

Ezekiel 43:1-2 – Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing east. And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east. And the sound of his coming was like the sound of many waters, and the earth shone with his glory.

Ezekiel 46:12 – When the prince provides a freewill offering, either a burnt offering or peace offerings as a freewill offering to the Lord, the gate facing east shall be opened for him.

These gates are supposed to be in Jerusalem with the new temple. Notice how only the east gate is open and it is through the east gate that the Spirit of God enters from the West. I truly believe that God’s Spirit is moving through Asia back to Jerusalem. The first will be last and the last will be first. Israel, in the end, will receive the Holy Spirit. Romans 11:26 reads, “All Israel will be saved.”

I believe it is the cry of God’s heart for the restoration of His friendship and love for Israel.

Let’s pray...

- Pray and declare the Spirit’s move to Jerusalem
- Pray for a heart of Israel to be formed within us... that we choose what God chooses

Some good books to read (there are others)...

John Hagee – In Defense of Israel

David Herzog – The Ancient Portals of Heaven: Glory, Favor, and Blessings