

**Pastor Tom Mortenson**

**Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York**

**February 17, 2019**

**Haman's Murderous Intent**

**Esther 4**

**Prayer:** *Father, again we just thank you for your grace, we just thank you for who you are, we thank you for the gift that you've given us of your Son and the ongoing gift you give us of your word. We have the privilege of opening it up and looking into it again this morning. And again as I pray, we pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit who makes it make sense, who makes it of value and who makes it last, and we pray that you would give us the ability to gain lasting value from this and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, this is our fourth entry into our study of the book of Esther, and so far we've been chronicling two main characters. We've chronicled Mordecai and Esther as two Jewish refugees transported to a foreign land with a foreign culture who have somehow managed to find themselves in positions of power. Esther, because of her beauty and grace has been selected by King Ahasuerus as his new queen, and Mordecai has managed to work himself to a position of prominence in the governments of Persia. And as we

found out last week, it just so happened that he's able to foil a plot by two of the king's eunuchs to murder the king. Well, Mordecai's heroic exploits for some reason go unnoticed and what comes to the fore at this point in our story is a conflict that begins to arise between Mordecai and the second most prominent political figure in all of Persia. It's a man known as Haman the Agagite. Haman was elevated to the second highest position in all of Persia, second only to the king with a standing order that everyone who sees him has to bow in his presence. There was but one person who refused that order and that was Mordecai. We read of how people approached Mordecai and asked him to repeatedly be willing to bow down to Haman and how he repeatedly refused. We read how this eventually got back to Haman and this incredibly insecure, incredibly ego-driven man became obsessed with not only making Mordecai pay for his disrespect with his life but with the lives of all of Mordecai's people as well. Haman's rage would not be satisfied until Mordecai, all of Mordecai's fellow Jews were eliminated. So that's the story so far. And what matters to us really here is the back story. You see, the story of Esther is the story of God working behind the scenes as he does in every one of our lives. So we need to go behind the scenes as well to see how God's sovereignty works itself out miraculously.

I pointed out last time that there is a broader context that we

need to consider in understanding some of God's actions particularly in the Old Testament. The broader context is that we are in the middle of a proxy war between two kingdoms, the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. And that war forms the backdrop of what God is doing not just with Israel, not just with Mordecai and Esther, but also with you and me. Today we want to look once more at the central villains in the book of Esther, and that would, of course, be Haman. Haman was a man whose hatred of Mordecai grew into an obsession that would not be satisfied simply by targeting Mordecai.

So we look at our text this morning, this is *Esther 3:5-6* and it describes it, it says: *And when Haman saw that Mordecai would not bow down or pay homage to him, Haman was filled with fury. But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone. So, as they had made known to him the people of Mordecai, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus.* Now Haman's not just some guy who happened to be at the right place at the right time and who happened to have an axe to grind with Mordecai. Haman was in fact a pawn or a rook or a knight placed in the middle of a cosmic chess game that was being played between these two kingdoms. And the more that you understand all of life is being played out on a stage as in this proxy war between these two kingdoms, the more you're going to be

better equipped to handle life itself. God has given us his vision of life and he's given it to us in his word and he's given it to us to enable us to perceive the enemy's moves and to be able to respond with God's counter moves when that war between the kingdoms begins to affect our every day life.

So we spent much of last week going into the history of this man Haman and how he was the distant offspring of King Agag who was an Amalekite and we looked backward at the history of the Amalekites and we found that God had insisted all along that Israel in general and King Saul in particular destroy this whole people group. And he insisted that because God knew they were a people who had been conscripted by the enemy for the express purpose of destroying the Jews. I said last week it was not coincidence that brought an anti-Semite like Haman to power in Esther's day because nothing, nothing happens by coincidence. Everything that occurs on this planet must be understood in the context of the war that is ongoing between the two kingdoms. *Ephesians 6* says: *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.* What you need to know is there is an enemy of our souls who is actively waging war against us and who wants more than anything to blend into the woodwork that people -- so that people would have no

perception whatsoever that he's even there. And over against that we have the active sovereign hand of God guiding each and every action and counter action down to the tiniest detail, so much so that Jesus himself would say that not even a common sparrow can fall to the ground apart from his Father's will. I mean we know from our understanding of scripture that God's sovereignty winds itself within and without every single strand of human activity in a way far beyond our ability to perceive or understand, and we've seen time and again that God can take the good, the bad, and the ugly including even the evil intentions of man and superintend them for his good. We're firm believers in Romans 8:28 that tells us as lovers of Jesus, we can be confident that God chooses every single event that takes place in our lives to work towards the goal of shaping and molding us into the very image of his Son. And we know that because time and again we encounter that same sovereign power at work in the lives of his people in the Bible. And what God wants for us, what really what I want for us to be able to view our lives, our culture, and even our politics from the ten thousand foot level where we can apply God's own wisdom to living out our lives, understanding that in the context of this war that's going on between the kingdoms. The apostle Paul understood all too well that Satan, this arch enemy, this ruler of the kingdom of darkness, that he has his minions, he has his influence all the way down to some two bit low level demon who afflicts even the decisions that

take place between me and my neighbor. In fact when Paul was dealing with the Corinthian church with all of its struggles with sin internally and externally, he begged his fellow Corinthian believers to freely forgive all of the hurts and all of the back biting that had been ongoing in that particular church, and he knew that much of it had the telltale fingerprints of the enemy's work. Paul himself had been subject of much of the back biting innuendo and rumor, and so he led the way by insisting that forgiveness be viewed as a strategic countermeasure against an enemy that had so infiltrated this church that it was devouring itself. Paul begged his fellow believers to lead with forgiveness -- quote -- as he said, *in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.*

I want to speak this morning about some of those schemes, because the enemy wants nothing more than our ignorance to enable him to work unopposed. You know, once a week I meet at the pregnancy center, I meet with some of the staff and the volunteers and we pray each week, knowing that we have an enemy who hates the very idea of pregnancy centers, who wants nothing more than to destroy them, and he schemes to do just that. I've talked to many a staff person who's been amazed to find that after working there for a while, they find themselves growing short with their colleagues or bitter at this slight or that slight or envious of this person and

that person, and we determined that a lot of that was not internal, it was external. Paul tells us in *Ephesians 6* that: *We wrestle not against flesh and blood* and he also tells us to put on the shield of faith against the fiery darts of the evil, so when we have this little meeting, we pray against those fiery darts which oftentimes takes the internal form of jealousy or backbiting or envy or a host of other sins of the flesh that could just rip a crisis pregnancy center to shreds. And almost every week I remind us all of the things that the enemy doesn't want us to be aware of, and I quote that scripture which Paul says, we're not unaware of his schemes. The book of Esther is really a recounting of how the enemy's schemes and how God counter schemes. Haman's hatred and his rage against the Jews was the chosen enemy -- was the chosen instrument of the enemy to attempt the destruction of the entire people of Israel. I mean the point was to destroy them before the Lord Jesus would even arrive. And the reason why is because Satan knew that Jesus Christ would destroy him and his works. By taking all of our sin upon himself on a cross, Jesus effectively denied Satan his right to claim us in our fallenness. And when we by faith trust in his sacrifice for us, we take his righteousness in exchange for our sin, God then sees us as perfect in Christ and Satan's claim on us is now rendered null and void. And God states even directly in *1 John*: *The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil*. I mean we know that Satan is a

defeated foe. We also know that we're safe in the arms of Jesus. However, God wants us to know that we still have a fight to fight along with him while we're here on earth.

So God wants us to understand how the Hamans of Satan's kingdom operate. Mike Cosper has written an outstanding book on Esther, it's called *Faith Among the Faithless*. It's got a great subtitle, it's *Learning From Esther How to Live in a World Gone Mad*. That's quite appropriate. Listen to how he describes Haman. He says: "What's the proper Christian response to the Hamans of the world? Not just to their evil acts, but to the human beings themselves? They are, after all, still human beings, made in the image of God. One possible response is a kind of empathy. We might look at Haman and say, 'That could be me. There are sparks of evil, hate, and wretchedness within me that could be fanned into flames like his own.' This is perfectly true, but a word of caution is needed. There's a gap between the potential for evil in the human heart and the cultivation of evil in the human heart. Haman wasn't just someone who woke up one day and gave himself over to murder and genocide. Instead, we see someone who nurtured fantasies of murder, whose appetite for power was absolute, and who allowed this darkness to flourish and grow in his imagination. What started as a personal grudge bloomed into a fantasy of genocide. We often talk about figures like these and use language such as 'humanize'



and 'demonize.' The effort to humanize them is to remind us that they're flesh and blood, just like us. All very true. But I suppose I want to make the case for a little more demonization in the world. In part, this is what it means to have a Christian imagination -- a way of seeing the world that knows there are spirits at work beyond what we can see. Haman's evil, like Hitler's and Stalin's was demonic. Satanic. And we need disconcerting imaginations that recognize that kind of evil when it arises."

Cosper goes on to suggest that Haman was not the only focus of evil in this story. You see, he couldn't have accomplished what he set out to do without the help of his partner in crime and that was King Ahasuerus. Haman and Ahasuerus represent two very different kinds of evil that we see at work even now today in our culture. Haman was the active purveyor of hatred and destruction, but Ahasuerus was the passive purveyor, the one whose ignorance and indifference allowed it to flourish. You know, we read about what took place and we see Haman approaching the king with this plan to destroy the Jews and he goes to the king and he never even names who he's after. Listen to how he puts this. This is *Esther 3:8*. He says: *"There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom. Their laws are different from those of every other people, and they do not*

*keep the king's laws so that it is not to the king's profit to tolerate them. If it please the king, let it be decreed that they be destroyed, and I will pay 10,000 talents of silver into the hands of those who have charge of the king's business, that they may put it into the king's treasuries."* Ahasuerus was too ignorant or self-absorbed to even ask who these people are. He goes on to say: *So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews. And the king said to Haman, "This money is given to you, the people also, to do with them as it seems good to you."* Little did he know he was actually writing a death certificate for another Jew who kept her identification secret and that would be his own wife, Esther. His indifference to the destruction of a whole people group was an evil of a very different sort from Haman's, but together they were determined to destroy the Jewish nation. I mean they didn't know and they certainly didn't care that they were merely cogs in a wheel of a master plan by an enemy.

May I suggest that we, too, have that same kind of demonic evil that is flourishing in our culture and it often succeeds spectacularly by simply hiding in plain sight. It's something I've spoken about repeatedly for many years and it's as real and evil as the evil that Esther and Mordecai face because it comes from the very same pit, and I'm talking about abortion. See, the enemy's

pattern or scheme is almost always the same. Render a people group silent, powerless, and subhuman, then you can systematically destroy them. It's what Haman was attempting to do with the Jews in Persia. It's what Hitler succeeded in doing with the Jews in Germany, and it's what our culture has succeeded in doing with the unborn of America. You know, in the last few weeks there's been a firestorm of criticism directed at the Governor of New York State who passed a radical Reproductive Rights Act that allowed for abortion up to the day of birth. And most of you know that was quickly followed by the comments of the Governor of Virginia, pediatric neurologist no less, who advocated that they should let a child be born, make it comfortable, and after having a discussion with the parents and the doctor, they would decide whether or not the child should live. Well, this has served to focus attention, however briefly, on something the enemy has been tirelessly working on since 1973 when the taking of human life in the womb was first made legal. So this morning I want to briefly revisit the teaching that I give each year about why abortion in particular is precisely the kind of demonic attack that requires what Cospers is talking about. It requires a discerning imagination that recognizes the kind of evil that Cospers's pointing out in his book. And this is what he goes on to say. He says:

"Figures such as Hitler, Stalin, and Haman share a common weapon in

the spread of their evil intentions. Some call it ideology. It's a fantastic vision for the world that justifies the evil means necessary for accomplishing it. For Hitler, it was the fantasy of German supremacy, a master race, and a global empire. For Stalin, it was the fantasy of communism -- a utopian world of economic equality and prosperity. For Haman, it was the purity and unity of the Persian Empire. In each case, the fantasy justified the tyrant's horrible means: concentration camps, pogroms, forced labor, war, and genocide. This kind of fantasy isn't limited to the political realm, though. Fantasies and utopian dreams shape culture in all kinds of ways, and justify evil means to accomplish them. Consider, for example, the arguments in favor of abortion. Its justification depends on an ideology that dreams of a world of unbounded individual freedom, which we're told is isn't possible without the right to terminate a pregnancy."

Unbounded individual freedom is the carrot that is perpetually held out by our culture's leaders to justify abortion. They're just like Haman. They have no idea who they are serving and why. But thanks be to God and his word we have the ability to cut through the smoke and see abortion for precisely what it is, and what it is is a major tactic of the enemy in the war between the two kingdoms. In fact it's a frontal attack on the image of God, and it starts with the most basic question anyone can ask themselves and that

question is: Why are we here? I mean that question was asked centuries ago by the authors of the *Westminster Catechism*. The very first question they asked was: What is the chief end of man? Why am I here? Well, that answer, according to the Catechism and according to scripture, is the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. So the next logical question is, okay, how do you glorify God? Well, God's glory is his character and his attributes made manifest. So glorifying God is really manifesting or displaying in our lives who God is and what God does. You see, God created only one creature to expressly demonstrate his character, and we are that creature. When Jesus commanded us to "*let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven,*" what he was telling us is that we are, in effect, God's living billboards. And what he's telling us is that you were put here on earth to glorify your Father. So understand, human beings in God's eyes are very big deals. God tells us why in the very beginning in the book of Genesis. He makes it clear that of all of the creatures in all of creation, there's only one creature who's been given the "*imago dei,*" which is the image of God. *Genesis 1:27* says: *So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.* We know again from God's word that Satan is a defeated foe who's been thrown out of heaven, who knows that his time to wreak havoc on earth is limited and his

fate is sealed. All he has left is a series of battles that can only give him a brief taste of victory. I mean, we know he can't possibly attack the victor, that would be God himself, his creator. So he can't possibly attack God. So he goes for the next best thing. He goes for the creatures who bear the image of God. I mean, he took on the form of a serpent and he entered into the very Garden of Eden where the very first man and woman to bear the image of God had been created and what does he do there? He tempts them into defiling that image by defying the creator and eating the forbidden fruit, and he was wildly successful. He caused their perfection to completely collapse, I mean, in one fell swoop God's image was defiled and man's perfection was shattered. And we all know the rest is history. What I don't think we realize is how specifically Satan still targets the image of God that we bear and how he does that. Jesus gave us real insight into how Satan operates in a description he gave us of him in *John 8*. He said: *"He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies."* So according to Jesus, Satan is the polar opposite of truth. Everything about him and his kingdom is a lie, and that lie gets promulgated as truth to any and all who are not protected by God's truth.

I pointed out that one of the most popular and one of the most misunderstood scriptures in all of the Bible is *Proverbs 29:18* which says: *Where there is no vision, the people perish.* Believe it or not, that scripture is not talking about a plan or a goal for your future. Instead what God is speaking about is the truth that is contained in scripture. And what he's telling us is that in itself is the vision. It's God's main weapon in the battle against the kingdoms. And God says if you go outside of the boundaries of that vision, if you go outside of the boundaries of that truth, you will perish. And just as there are two separate kingdoms, the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness, there are two separate visions, two separate groundings. One is in the truth and the other is in a lie. And if you don't capture the vision of truth in scripture, God is saying the Hamans of this world are going to outfox, out man and outgun you, and you will perish. And God says that because the only thing outside of truth is by definition a lie. Jesus is telling us that lying is Satan's native tongue, and his native tongue is the vision that most of this world thinks of as truth. I mean we live in this life in this -- on this planet under the realm of the king of liars. The very same angel who was thrown out of heaven and cast down to earth is now the primary agent behind the headlong rush of our culture to what appears to be yet another attempt by the enemy to eliminate yet another people group. And when the governors in New York and

Virginia were exposed as having these monstrously anti-life views, their response was amazing. I mean, they didn't backtrack, they didn't back down, they didn't make excuses, instead they doubled down. You know it's been said that America's answer to shame is shamelessness. We're seeing shamelessness in action. And there's a reason for this that is directly related to Haman and his hatred and his rage toward the Jews. You see, the enemy of our souls has a hatred and a rage for who we are and for the image that we bear. And even though his time on earth is short or maybe because his time on earth is short, we now see that the gloves are off and the enemy no longer particularly cares to hide.

You know, I just want to repeat what I taught before about the three different ways in particular that the enemy is using to attack God's image in us today. It's a three-pronged attack. There's an image on -- there's an attack on God's image through its design, there's an attack on God's image through its diversity and there's an attack on God's image through its development. Like I said, I've spoken about this at length before, so I'm just going to touch briefly on the first two before we get to the arena where Satan has his present day Haman working out his will in our culture.

But Satan's first avenue of attack is in the area of design and we



can see that today. It's been brilliantly exercised. The battlefield today design wise is gender. And once again, the battle is between two very different visions of truth. We have gender fluidity on one end and we have binary complementarity on the other. And binary complementarity, the beauty of the way that male and female go together on every single level is now considered by many in our culture as an idea that spawns patriarchy and misogyny and oppression. Folks now reject the truth of binary complementarity for the lie of gender fluidity. And the insanity that this is producing is a reflection of the fact that this is nothing more than a direct attack on the image of God that we bear in its design. Just to go back to the basics, it says: *So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.* That's binary, that's two. We're now up to seventy different genders. Because *where there is no vision the people perish.*

Next there's an attack on the image of God borne by us humans in its diversity. At its core this is exactly what racism is. This is an attack on the image of God. I mean speaking of the racial divide between Jew and Gentile, God said: *But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by*

*abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. Jesus went to the cross to make us one new people, one man, one new man in place of two. And this new man was no longer subject to the demands of perfection because Christ himself had borne the cost of our imperfection by becoming our sin on the cross. Well, how dare we in any way try to re-divide that one man in terms of the color of his skin. I mean Satan sees racism as one of his greatest assets. Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in God's sight, but Satan has successfully used race and nationality as key elements to divide and separate us into these competing groups who fear and mistrust each other. I mean there's a reason why racism after hundreds of years is still a huge problem in this country but it has more to do with who we are than I think many of us realize, because racism is essentially an assault on the imago dei. I mean the enemy attacks the image of God in us because it doesn't look exactly like we do. And he delights when the bearers of God's own image turn on each other based on nothing more than physical or cultural or ethnic differences, because where there is no vision, hey, the people perish. I mean, if we only looked to the vision that God gives us in his word, we would see racism for the lie that it is. In Acts 10:34 it says: So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I*

*understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation, anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him."*

"Anyone" means "anyone."

As gender confusion attacks God's image in its design, so racism attacks it in its diversity. But next is where we find ourselves fully entering into Haman's territory. In the murderous intent of our culture's leaders towards the unborn, Satan reserves his most powerful attack on the image of God in its development. The Jews of Haman's day, like the Jews in the Holocaust were silent, they were powerless, and they were treated as subhuman. And it turns out that Haman is alive and well in the 21st century because that's precisely how today's cultural leaders treat the unborn bearers of God's image, as silent, as powerless, and certainly as subhuman.

Over the years I've given many different arguments against abortion. This morning I want to give you again yet another pro-life argument based on a very short and simple quote from President Ronald Reagan. He said, "I have noticed everyone who is for abortion has been born." It's a bumper sticker I have on my car. One thing that is inarguable in any discussion between those with a pro-life position and those who are pro-choice is that both participants in the arguments have already been born. They're certainly alive. I almost think right off the bat that I need say

nothing further than to point out the obvious fact that should end the argument even before it starts. And what I would want to argue is that if you're making any argument whatsoever, it's pretty obvious you're alive, it's pretty obvious you're breathing. That means that you've passed whatever fiscal, sociological or philosophical gauntlet there was during your mother's gestation and you made it alive to that nine-month finish line. Well, it's just striking to me that having made it safely in your own personal lifeboat to the destination of birth that you now, as somebody who is pro-choice, are caught up in the process of pulling up the gangplank, taking in the life savers and making sure the ladders are up in order to make sure that somebody else who is in the exact same position you once were in doesn't have the opportunity at life that you clearly and obviously have. I mean, you can tell me a thousand different reasons why life is difficult for single moms, and I get it. You can tell me how hard it is for women who want a career, for women who are struggling with the potential of some kind of birth defect, but let me ask you, if this was your own mother and it was your own mother facing whatever kinds of socioeconomic circumstances you can imagine, just consider what would have happened if she had listened to the pro-choice argument in your case? You wouldn't even be here. You wouldn't be able to make your case against life. So how can you imagine, how can you argue to remove the chance of another human being to have what you

already have? How can you do that without the argument itself seeming like the height of selfishness? I mean I've got my life, now it's incumbent on me to make sure that you don't get yours. We're not talking about money or property or opportunities, we're talking about the right to exist. I mean it seems to me to be pro-choice is to deny for others what I've already received for myself and that's simply the right to be born. I mean it's a right that obviously trumps every other right. I find it astounding that so many on the evangelical left seem so concerned about social justice and not nearly as concerned about abortion when the ultimate social injustice is taking someone's life. I mean concerns about education and opportunity and racism and health, they don't mean a thing to someone who's already dead. And I have a hard time hearing arguments that put those issues over the issue of life itself. I mean once again, we are looking at the ruler of this world do what he does best. Again, Jesus said, *"He was a murderer from the beginning and he does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies."*

Well, if I was Satan, that would be my primary weapon. I mean I'd use the lie when it came to the attacking the image of God in its design and its diversity. I'd do my best to ensure that people would perish due to a lack of vision. But when it comes to

abortion, I would combine the lie with my other defining characteristic, again as Jesus put it, *"He was a murderer from the beginning."* I would kill God's image bearers while they're still in their mother's womb and then I would overwhelm the women that I trapped with guilt. I would then seek to cut them off from the only resource that could give them life by grace by giving them my vision of lies instead of God's word. I would keep them from that one weapon that I fear the most and that is the cross. I'd keep them from knowing *Romans 5:8* which says: *But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* If I could just keep people from getting that vision, from understanding the truth that God holds out absolute forgiveness to any and all who seek it through repentance, if I could blind people to the grace that is offered to them through the cross, I could kill God's image and then destroy with guilt those women I victimized. Because *where there is no vision, the people perish.* Gender confusion and racism are awful sins but the victims of those sins still have a chance to escape. Not so with abortion.

*Proverbs 24* says: *Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter.* Well, it's the next part of that verse that drags us back to the book of Esther. The next part of that verse says: *If you say, "Behold, we did not know this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not*

*he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?* See, I mentioned at the beginning of this message that there are two types of evil that are presented in the book of Esther. We have Haman, the active purveyor of hatred and destruction, and we have Ahasuerus who was too ignorant or self-absorbed to even ask who these people were. He was the passive purveyor whose ignorance and indifference allowed it to flourish. May I suggest that men such as the governor of New York and Virginia are the Hamans of today. They're actively promoting the slaughter of children in the womb and celebrating legislation that ensures it. But many of us even in the church are like Ahasuerus. Many are ignorant or indifferent, and let me tell you why, many of them are ignorant and indifferent because they never heard the church speak about these things. Let me explain why in this situation ignorance is no excuse at all.

You know, after World War II President Eisenhower did something extraordinary to the German citizens who lived in and around the concentration camps where millions of Jews had been executed. I've mentioned this before. This is what he did. He took his soldiers and they went into those towns and they forcibly marched the citizens, not the soldiers, but the citizens of those towns into the camps to force them to see what they had studiously avoided seeing. Eisenhower understood that these people's ignorance was an

ignorance of choice, one that they were solely responsible for and one that they had cultivated in order to avoid having to make any type of difficult moral choice. He understood that their lack of choice was a choice, and Eisenhower was determined to hold them responsible for it. Well, it's the exact type of ignorance that allows the vast majority of pro-choice folks to think that the only issue in abortion is the freedom to choose. You know, one of the most appropriate questions you could ask somebody who is pro-choice is this: Can you describe for me exactly what takes place during an abortion? I mean the vast majority will say, no, I don't really know. Well then wouldn't you have the right to say, well, how can you support something you don't even know anything about? You see, the vast majority of the folks who don't know what an abortion is all about don't know because they don't want to know. And once again the word of God exposes the lie. It says: *If you say, "Behold, we did not know this." Does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work? "Behold we did not know this."* God says your ignorance is by design. I mean how else can you explain the livid reaction people have when they see these explicit photographs of what actually takes place during an abortion? I mean, folks get outraged and you can just see, it's palpable, they're just furious. I've seen films of people ripping the pictures apart because they're just insanely angry. But



they're not angry at the procedure itself, they're angry at the tastelessness of the photos. I mentioned before, I recently watched a Ken Burns documentary on the Vietnam War and it was filled with pictures of dead, burnt, broken bodies. Nobody complained about that one at all because no one still clings to a moral ambivalence and a contrived ignorance when it comes to that war. When it comes to the war on the unborn, it's a completely different story. Folks demand the right to stay ignorant. I submit to you that anyone who actually witnessed what takes place during an abortion, which is the forcible dismemberment of a living human being while he's still inside his mother's womb, if they actually witnessed one, they'd be so traumatized by what they saw taking place, they'd have an almost instant change of opinion. But that's not the point. The point is to remain ignorant. But we have the vision. We have the scripture. And again it tells us this much about our enemy, it says: *"He was a murderer from the beginning, and doesn't stand in the truth, because there's no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies."* We've watched as those lies and those murders have hardened the heart and seared the conscience and wounded the spirit of an entire nation.

So what do we do? Well, the good news here is also the bad news. First of all it's that none of us can claim ignorance and that

every single one of us has an obligation to *rescue those who are being taken away to death*; and to *hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter*. All right. How do you do that? Well, if you looked at that insert in your bulletin, there's going to be a gathering, a collection of believers to mourn what has taken place in New York, and it calls for a day of prayer and fasting or you can go up there and -- it's by ticket only and I don't know if it's sold out, but you can spend a day in prayer and mourning for what's taking place in our country. You can pray in solidarity with those who are going to Albany this week, you can commit to pray for our particular pregnancy center, the Tri-State Pregnancy Center, you can support it financially, you can seek ways in which you can volunteer your time and your effort towards those who are stumbling to the slaughter. You know, we're in the process of reshaping the goals and direction of the Center to include actively coming alongside single moms and moms who are in crisis pregnancy and our goal is really to actively mentor single moms with intact families who can share God's grace and love that way. You can volunteer yourself and your family. We also need more volunteer counselors and people who are -- people who are simply willing to do whatever needs to be done. It's not really rocket science. Haman is alive and well in 21st century America and so is Ahasuerus. The proxy war continues to rage. But we have the ultimate weapon. We have God's grace, we have God's truth, and we have God's vision in his

word. And by God's grace we have the privilege of defeating them now just like God defeated them in Esther's day. So let's pray.

*Father, I just again, I pray for the abominations that are taking place daily across the country, for the wickedness that has taken place in these last few weeks here right in our state of New York. I pray that you would touch each and every one of our conscience so that we would not be those who years, years later who look back and say, how is it that that could have happened? Lord, I don't want 40 years from now somebody to be saying to any of the young people in here, this took place right under your nose and you didn't do anything? Lord, speak to us about what we need to do, speak to us about how we can pray and fast and contribute and volunteer to end this scourge. I pray for your grace and your wisdom and I pray especially for any woman who's been caught up and victimized by the enemy in this way and any woman who is overwhelmed with guilt at having made a tragic decision oftentimes forced into it by husbands and families and parents, Lord, I just pray that you would give each and every one of those women the understanding and the knowledge that they can be completely set free by the blood of your Son, given for them on the cross. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*