

Season 3, Episode 9: The Great Reversal (Chapters 9&10)

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Felicity: This podcast is sponsored by 10ofthose.com. 10ofthose.com handpick the best Christian books that point to Jesus and sell them at discounted prices. I've recently enjoyed Ten Words To Live by Jen Wilkin, a book on the Ten Commandments which, at first glance I wouldn't have chosen to pick up. But this book surprised me with how grace fuelled it was in terms of thinking about the commandments and how applicable it is for our everyday. Every chapter there's an expanded obedience section where she helps us think through what it looks like to be obedient in our everyday lives. I really enjoyed it. Highly recommend it. Grab a copy at 10ofthose.com.

Sarah: Welcome to two sisters in the cup of tea My name is Sarah and I live in the UK. And this is my sister Felicity and she lives in the US.

Felicity: Hi, Sarah. Hi, everyone. What is your biscuit of choice, Sarah?

Sarah: Well, our uncle came to stay a few weeks ago, just before we moved, and he bought me this really quite posh tin of biscuits here. In fact, I just looked on the bottom and I haven't realized that they cost £9. About a pound of biscuit. They are cartridge and butler tea time classic stem and brown ginger biscuits. And they're very good, but they're very spicy.

Felicity: Interesting. Ginger with a kick.

Sarah: A supreme kick.

Felicity: Yeah.

Sarah: You couldn't handle a lot. Well, I can't handle a lot of these at once, that's for sure. Maybe that's a good thing, though, especially if they're like a pound of biscuit.

Felicity: Yeah, well, that's true. Don't get addicted to those ones. I know. What have you got? Well, at the other end of the scale, really, I've got a Fox's Crunchy Cream, which I think is to be quite a classic. It's one of my husband's favorites you're looking to help out for I know.

Sarah: I think they're quite sweet, don't they?

Felicity: Oh, yeah. But they do live up to the name and the crunch.

Sarah: The cream is good.

Felicity: The cream is good. The crunch is good. I gave one to an American this week. She thought it was outstanding.

Sarah: Well, can you believe it? We're onto the last little bit of Esther. We're going to do chapters nine and ten together. Considering chapter ten is only a few lines long, we are going to be doing a summary kind of episode next time, aren't we? So this isn't the final episode of the season just yet. It kind of felt like last week's episode could have just, I don't know, like last week's chapter. Chapter eight, the end. I was so excited and joyful at the end. Why hasn't the book ended there?

Felicity: Yeah, absolutely. I feel like, yeah, what else is there to say? Come on. There's so much excitement and joy and it feels like the narrator is maybe just extended a bit beyond what he had to do. But is that the case? We should get into the text. That's a good thing to be thinking about, isn't it? Why do we have chapters nine and ten? Should we read it and see where we read?

Sarah: You're going to read?

Felicity: I am going to read. Okay. Chapter nine. Here we go. On the 13th day of the 12th months, the month of ADHD, the edict reminded by the king was to be carried out on this day. The enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them. But now the tables were turned and the Jews got the upper hand over those who hated them. The Jews assembled in their cities and all the provinces of King's Hershes to attack those determined to destroy them. No one could stand against them because the people of all the other nationalities were afraid of them. And all the nobles of the provinces, the Satchraps, the governors and the kings administrators helped the Jews because fear of Mordecai had seized them.

Mordecai was prominent in the palace. His reputation spread throughout the provinces and he became more and more powerful. The Jews struck down all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying them, and they did what they pleased to those who hated them. In the Czechidel of Suza, the Jews killed and destroyed 500 men. They also killed Pashandatha Dalfon, Aspetar, Paratha, Adelia, Aridata, Parmesita, Arasai, Aridai and Vasafa and the ten sons of Ham. And son of Hamadha. The enemy of the Jews. But they did not lay their hands on the plunder. The number of those killed in the citadel of Sour was reported to the king. That same day, the king said to Queen Esther, the Jews have killed and destroyed 500 men and the ten sons of Hayman and the sister Sousa what have they done in the rest of the king's provinces now? What is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? It will also be granted, if it pleases the king. Esther, answer. Give the Jews and Susan permission to carry out this day's edict tomorrow also and let Haman's ten sons be impaled on poles. So the king commanded that this be done and edict was issued in Susa, and they impaled the ten sons of Haman. The Jews and Susan came together on the 14th day of the month of Ada. And they put to death in Susa 300 men. But they did not lay their hands on the plunder. Meanwhile, the remainder of the Jews who in the king's provinces also assembled to protect themselves and to get relief from their enemies. They killed 750 of them, but did not lay their hands on the plunder. This happened on the 13th day of the month of Ada. And the 14th they rested and made it a day of feasting and joy. The Jews in Susa, however, had assembled on the 13th and 14th. And then on the 15th, they rested and made it a day of feasting and joy. That is why rural Jews, those living in villages, observed the 14th of the month of Adar as a day of joy and feasting a day for giving presents to each other. Mordecai recorded these events and he sent letters to all the Jews throughout the provinces of King's Erxes, near and far that they should celebrate annually the 14th and 15th day of the month of Ada. As the time when the Jews got released from their enemies and as the month when their sorrow was turned into joy and the morning into a day of celebration. He wrote to them to observe the days as days of feasting and joy and giving presents to food to one another and gifts to the poor. So the Jews agreed to continue the celebration they had begun, doing what Mordecai had written to them. For Hayman, some of Hamadafa, the Aggie, the enemy of all the Jews had plotted against the Jews to destroy them and had cast a pure, that is, the lot, for their ruin and destruction. But when the plot came to the king's attention, he issued written orders that the evil scheme Hayman had devised against the Jew should come back on his to his own head and that he and his son should be impaled on poles. Therefore, these days were called Purim, from the word pure. Because of everything written in this letter and because of what they had seen and what had happened to them, the Jews took it on themselves to establish the custom that they and their descendants and all who join them should without fail observe these two days every year in the way prescribed and at the time appointed. These days should be remembered and observed in every generation by every family and in every province and in every city. And these days of Purum should never fail to be celebrated by the Jews nor should the memory of these days die out among their descendants. So Queen Esther, daughter of Aberhail, along with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter concerning pure. And Mordecai sent letters to all the Jews in 127 provinces of exercise kingdom words of goodwill and assurance to establish these days of PureM at their designated times as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had decreed for them and as they had established for themselves and their descendants in regard to their times of fasting and lamentation. Esther's decree confirmed these regulations about pure and it was written down in the records. King's Europeans imposed tribute throughout the empire to its distant shores and all his acts of power and might, together with a full account of the greatness of Mordecai, whom the king had promoted. Are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Media and Persia? Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Zurich, preeminent among the Jews, and held in high esteem by his many fellow Jews because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews.

Sarah: Thank you, Christie. And, wow, what a lot going on there in those couple of chapters. But I guess we're starting to see, as we just read the full account of that, why it's so important. Because what we get there is God's righteous judgment against his enemies, don't we? And that is the necessary ending that hadn't happened so far. Would you agree?

Felicity: Yes. And I think that is maybe indicative the fact that we have kind of forgotten that that needed to happen or maybe didn't really want it to happen. It may be indicative of how we kind of think about judgment. I don't know. I feel like I was not so bothered in my head when I was reading this narrative as to whether those who were against the Jews were going to be dealt with. But I think these chapters show us that it's really important that the enemies of God's people, essentially the enemies of God, are faced with justice. That is what needs to happen.

Sarah: Yeah. And it's quite a specific justice here, because, actually, we referred back in a few episodes ago, we talked about one Samuel 15 as being a crucial time where King Saul did not obey the Lord in destroying the enemy and the agagites. And that's where the kind of enmity between Haman and Mordecai began. And actually, here we get a kind of resolution of that whole story. Flisty, can you kind of draw that out for us?

Felicity: Yes. So if you have a look at chapter nine, verse ten, we see the first one. So they did not lay their hands on the Plunder. And then it's repeated again. I think it's maybe repeated three times in this chapter. So that the emphasis is that they didn't do what David and his crew no, Saul and his crew did back in the aggregate. It's time they didn't take the plunder. So actually, they have been fully obedient to God here. And I think it's worth noticing that the response of the Jews is against those who are intending them harm. It's not a kind of just blanket destruction. Whoever crosses my path, it's actually anyone who is intending to destroy annihilates according to what the previous edict was.

Sarah: And that's why Esther's second request is so important, isn't it? Because it kind of feels a bit like, whoa, you're going a bit farther. Esther asking for another day. But actually, the specific request is that the Ten Sons of Haman would be dealt with. And actually, again, that's like resolving this generational enemy between God's people and the aggrava is their enemy, and that is resolving that.

Felicity: Yes, because Haman was the descendant of the person who kind of got it all wrong. So it makes sense if you just isolate it and think about just the gruesome nature of it. That doesn't really make sense. But if you get back into the big picture, I think it does make sense, because this is what needs to happen in order for justice to be fully done and actually for this great reversal to be fully completed. There is no kind of completeness to it unless this happens.

Sarah: And the completeness in terms of how God's people see the completeness of it, is that they establish traditions surrounding it, don't they? So whilst we had the joy and the celebrating last time, we actually have the traditions of Purim put into writing so that generation upon generation can be celebrating it and specific days set aside for it to keep remembering their salvation. So again, it's a very specific way of culmination of all that's happened.

Felicity: Yes, which maybe picks up on what we were talking about last episode in relation to joy, because there's a lot of feasting and joy in all these kind of written things, aren't they? These things that are being put in place are to aid the memory and I think as they aid the memory, then to prompt celebration and joy in response to what God has done for his people. So it's interesting thinking about intentionally rejoicing in these things. Maybe we do benefit as well from some formal kind of reminders of that as well. How do we actually think about Christmas, how do we actually think about Easter, those kinds of things. I don't know.

Sarah: Yes, even comedian, though, isn't it? Like it's an opportunity to intentionally how often you do that at church. It's setting aside that time to celebrate as family together, isn't it? What your salvation? I think also just I find it fascinating going through the themes of Esther. The kind of feasting theme is a big thing, isn't it? And you've got these drunken feasts at the beginning of the Empire and then you're ending with this beautiful picture of feasting, the culmination of all of God's faithfulness and salvation. And it's just wonderful, isn't it? And again, it's a massive pointer forwards to the ultimate day when Jesus comes back and there will be great feasting in Revelation, in the new creation. But before we can get on to that, let's just quickly pick up the way like let's just quickly notice the way Mordecai is raised up in this final couple of chapters.

Felicity: I know, isn't it just wonderful that we've seen Mordecai who's been dismissed all the way through by Haman, and then we last saw him and he was dressed as a king, and

then gradually in the last chapter we had then he's just been given more and more power and here he is, the man, isn't he? He's the man in charge, really, to the extent in chapter ten we have this, the full account of the greatness of Mordecai, and it's him, it's Mordecai who is giving the orders that actually do end up saving the people, while it's with the authority of the king, it's Mordecai who is then enabling it to happen. And we've talked about this briefly before, but just the idea that Mordecai points to the greater mediator, the greater king, in that the fact that he's dressed in royal robes back in chapter eight, I think it is. And then here we have him raised up to such prominence and greatness, it all points to the fact that he is almost kinglike. And as we see that, we then look forward to our greater king of the greater kingdom, of the greater feast, of the greater celebration of all of these things, it's a wonderful reminder of quite where all of this is heading in the big picture.

Sarah: Yeah, it's amazing, isn't it? Such a beautiful picture. The way that the story ends, just he spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews, and you just think about how that foreshadows Jesus speaking up the welfare of all his people, for how he intercedes, for how he approaches the throne rooms on behalf of us. Just all those pictures. It's so rich and deep, isn't it? And yeah, I think whilst this is like the most wonderful confirmation of everything through the book, we are left longing, aren't we? We are left longing for the perfect king, the perfect leader. And so you want to read on in the Bible that you want to read on because actually we know that Mordecai isn't the true king here. We know that he's just second in command.

Felicity: We know that he's not going to last forever. I think that's another thing as well, because the kingdoms kind of they come and go, don't they? Rise and fall. And so while we see the rise and the fall, which we've very much seen in the book of Esther, but actually we know that the ultimate rise that then doesn't change. And once God's people are raised up in the last day, there's nothing that can assail, that can threaten that that is unchanging as king.

Sarah: And that's just so exciting, isn't it, when you start to kind of see Jesus walk onto the pages of history in the New Testament and you see him, you see him fleshed out, the king has come, the king has come. The beginning of March, where it's like the kingdom has come repent and believes a good news. Well, it is really, truly good news in the context of what we've been reading. But I think also, I guess one of the big questions we're left with for our own hearts at the end of this chapter, and I don't know whether you felt the impact of this is just like, am I longing for the second coming? Am I longing for the ultimate kind of reversal and the ultimate confirmation of history to happen?

Felicity: It's really challenging that, isn't it? Because as we see the fact that we are kind of to look forwards, do we actually look forward to that? I don't know whether I do enough. And I was thinking as well, on that note, the kind of return of Jesus with the return of Jesus does come judgment as well. And how do we feel about that as we consider Jesus return? And I think Esther helps us to see the need for judgments and actually the rightness of that, and that God is just in that sense. So we have the delight in Jesus coming back and kind of being swept up into that feast, the ultimate feast, and with that, all sin will be dealt with and actually gone. It's an amazing thought, isn't it? And one that we actually don't think about enough or long for enough. I wonder what it would look like, actually, to look more that way in our everyday lives. Yes.

Sarah: I think it's praying, isn't it? It's praying to that end. Lord, would you help me to see this is the reality. To see that is the truth. That is what's happening. All of God's plan has happened apart from that, like, all of his words have been fulfilled and that's the only thing left to come, isn't it?

Felicity: Yeah.

Sarah: And the Bible timeline. And actually, do I live like that each day? Do I pray for unbelieving family and friends in light of what's going to happen?

Felicity: Yeah. And I think even Esther adds to our confidence that God is definitely going to do what he said he would do, isn't it? We can be absolutely sure that Jesus is going to come back, because God does work out his plans, even when it doesn't look like it. Because I think that's one of the things in Esther, isn't it? It's not that there's great drama and miracles all the time. It's that God's fingerprints are over every little detail. And so everything is pushing towards what he has said will happen at the end of time if Jesus

return. So I think, again, it comes back to that kind of bedrock of God's sovereignty as we see it more and more, that he is in charge, he is in control, things are working out according to his purposes, and that gives us confidence to live in the light of the fact that Jesus will return. So it's kind of both of those angles, isn't it, that then it contributes to us actually being able to live in the light of that and to pray eagerly for it, because we know that that is the case.

Sarah: I'm just reminding one another of that.

Felicity: Truth is why, isn't it?

Sarah: I wonder whether if I was more intentional in texting a few friends and just kind of reminding I don't know if we're reminding one another of what we're living for, who we're living for and the ultimate reality. Yeah.

Felicity: The excitement in that as well. It's kind of like, isn't it great? Yes. Bring it on, rather than like, there's this thing that's going to happen. I'm not sure I want it. But actually, as we look at Esther, we can be like, this is really good news. This is really good the kid is coming.

Sarah: Yeah. Wow. I mean, what a book. It's so rich, isn't it? And I think, as ever, we really are just kind of skating over the surface. But what a book and what an ending to see that glorious picture of Mordecai and the foreshadowing of the glorious Lord Jesus. Will I pray for us?

Felicity: Yes, do pray.

Sarah: Heavenly Father, we just thank you. We thank you that your word has proved true and faithful. We thank you that all your promises are met in Christ. That all your promises are yes in Him. We thank you so much that Esther has enlarged our hearts to see more and more of the Lord Jesus. And we thank you for the way that you've shown us that in these chapters. We thank you for the necessity and the goodness and rightness of your judgment at sin and all that is broken in the world. And we thank you that you deal with that and you also express your extraordinary love at the same time in saving your people. We thank you that ultimately that is met on the cross. And we thank you that as we stand in at the foot of the cross, we pray that we are safe and your everlasting arms. We prayed you so much, Lord. Amen.

Felicity: Amen. So, well, it's good that we've got one more episode to dig a bit deeper into the kind of the whole book, haven't we? So I feel like we definitely skated across the surface there, but we can dig in a bit deeper as we come to our next episode. So do tune in for the next one and do be rereading reading Esther, embedding it in hearts and minds. I think that's what we've enjoyed, isn't it?

Sarah: Yeah, big time. I think, especially if you come to the end of the book, it's easy just to close it, isn't it? But actually, it's a really good discipline and hence why we're doing a kind of summary episode each time, is to just help us really bed in what we've been learning, what we're going to take to heart. So we look forward to sharing our thoughts with you, and we look forward to connecting with you or what you've taken away from the book as well. We'll see you next time.

Felicity: See you next time. Thanks for listening. This podcast is sponsored by Tenor vote.com.