

Reverend Dr. Tony Crisp at AIPAC Policy Conference 2011

Transcript

Good morning and thank you for being here. Thank you for what you stand for. Please allow me at the outset of my remarks to say how grateful to God I am to speak to you today. And thank you to AIPAC for calling me in 2008, for opening my eyes and my heart to pro-Israel advocacy, and for extending to me the invitation to become a part of the most effective pro-Israel organization in America.

Thank God that AIPAC leadership had enough wisdom five years ago to reach out to the Christian community as an outreach. And I'm here today to say that we as evangelical Christians in America stand with you and stand for you.

Today, I stand before you because I am a Christian, a follower of Jesus of Nazareth, a believer in the Word of God, the Bible. I stand before you as a man who loves Jewish people, the nation of Israel as I love my own family. I stand before you as a man who has devoted the rest of my life to bringing evangelical Christians back to our Hebraic roots, and to championing the issue of pro-Israel America.

And even though I stand on this stage today before you as a single spokesman, I do not stand alone. Standing behind me, standing beside me are millions of pro-Israel Christians. And we say to you, the Jewish community in America, to the nation of Israel, and to those in Washington who make and execute our laws, that the bond between the United States of America and the state of Israel is a sacred and strategic bond that must never, never be broken.

As for my own personal journey, I first traveled a study in Israel in 1977. And for the past 34 years, I have traveled and studied the Bible in the land of its origin. I was moved to share what I learned with others and that is why over the past 20-plus years I have traveled to the land of Zion more than a hundred times with groups of pastors, lay people from more than a dozen denominations to learn about the origins of the Christian faith, and to study the Bible from its Jewish context.

In February 2009, I was asked to travel to Israel with the American Israel Educational Foundation, AIEF, the educational foundation affiliated with AIPAC. I did this to view the land in a way that in 34 years of travel to Israel I had not experienced. Through that wonderful experience, I was informed and inspired to become an advocate for the American-Israel relationship on a deeper level than I had ever been before. Through one-to-one mentoring, regional meetings and national meetings, such as Policy Conference and the summit, AIPAC has educated me on how to be more effective in sharing the message of Israel and the American-Israel relation to our nation's capital and the halls of power.

Like many of you, my love of Israel found new expression. I felt newly empowered to give voice and support to the land of my spiritual forefathers, to the land of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to the land of the children of Israel before whom I stand today. I was so moved by this new empowerment, that I acted finally on something that had been on my heart from the time that I became a Christian.

In 2009, after more than 32 years as a senior pastor, I resigned the Chilhowie Hills Baptist Church in Knoxville, Tennessee to dedicate the rest of my life to creating by God's grace what is in effect a spiritual birthright movement among Christian pastors and leaders in America. I have founded the Olive Tree Foundation, USA to bring this God-given dream into a reality. In eight months, on January the 2, 2012, the first wave of over 1,000 senior pastors will travel to Israel for an 11-day tour at no cost to them to study the Bible from the Jewish perspective from which it was written. But that isn't all that they will study.

So much did this affect my life that as a part of each Olive Tree Foundation trip, two and a half days of the 11-day trip will be dedicated strictly to Jewish sites such as Yad Vashem, the Israel museum, the Western Wall, the Western Wall tunnel, the Valley of Tears, the entire Golan Heights, the Jordan Valley, Qumran, and Masada.

But simply experiencing these religious and strategic sites is not enough. We will dedicate an entire evening of each trip to educate the 1,000 pastors to pro-Israel advocacy the AIPAC way. Let's face it, nobody does it better than AIPAC.

Each pastor who participates in an Olive Tree Foundation trip must commit to taking a six week preparatory course before their trip and to teaching the material to their congregations upon six months of their return to the United States. These 1,000 pastors will take the message of Israel, the message of the Jewish homeland, the message of the U.S.-Israel relationship to one million people who will fill the pews of their churches. Truly we are better together.

Yes -- yes, our theme refers to the U.S.-Israel relationship, but it also is true of Jews and Christians and people of every race and color; Democrats, Republicans, Tea Party, and no party. When we unite to support Israel, we are truly better together.

And just a personal word to you, if I could. Many of you that are sitting here today were born to privilege. But many of us were not. I grew up in abject poverty. Abandoned by my parents at age seven, I went to live with a grandmother who took me in. I grew up as people did during the Depression days -- no running water, very little electricity in the house. And I could go on and on about the deep despair to the depths of my soul that I went into during those years.

But I am here today as living proof, to say to you that in this great land that we're living and the great God that we serve, that God can raise up anyone. He can use you. He can use me. He can use those that have been born to privilege and those who have not. And each one of us can do something for Israel. Some of us can do more than others, but everybody can do something. I encourage you to get involved today.

To my Jewish friends here today and across America, in Israel, and the world, let me express to you the horror of my soul that people who have called themselves Christians, who've spoken the name of my savior, the humble Jewish carpenter who was a rabbi of the Jewish people and corrupted our true faith to become a weapon against the Jewish people. It is a burden on my heart for which I can only beg your forgiveness.

To my fellow Christians, let me say you and I must stand against the enemies of Israel and the Jewish people who have been within our ranks for centuries. We must cast away the false teaching of replacement theology in our seminaries and Bible schools.

The teaching of replacement theology teaches that the church has replaced Israel; that God has cast away his people Israel; that the prophecies about Israel will never come true. This teaching planted the seeds of anti-Semitism in the heart of Christendom that ultimately grew into the weeds of hatred, the vines of destruction from the crusades to the inquisition to the Holocaust.

When our schools teach replacement theology, they teach that Jews no longer matter spiritually, and they teach that the people of Israel no longer have a valid connection with the land of Israel. We must teach instead what the Bible actually says -- that Israel is the apple of God's eye; that the covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is an everlasting, unconditional covenant; that the prophecies of the prophets concerning Israel's ultimate return to the land are as true as the morning sun that rises in the east.

We must reject the easy apathy that so many Christians feel. We cannot be silent as too many were during the Holocaust. We cannot think someone else will be our Jewish brother's keepers. We must raise our voices and say that Israel is the eternal homeland of the Jewish people, that Jerusalem is its eternal capital, and that the people of Israel live and will live forever.

We must raise our voices in the halls of Congress and the corridors of power on behalf of the U.S.-Israel relationship. We must train our voices as we do together in AIPAC to align ourselves with both ancient and modern Israel for our sake. God's covenant of blessing and cursing, land and lineage, is still as viable enforced today as it

was the day that God spoke to Abraham 4,000 years ago. Be encouraged in this day when Israel's enemy seek to delegitimize and isolate this great nation and bastion of freedom in the Middle East and around the world.

There are millions of Christians who stand hand in hand with you. As fellow Americans, lovers of the Jewish people, and the nation of Israel, let us all heed the words of the prophet Isaiah, when another day and time enemies were surrounding Israel seeking to destroy the nation and take the land by force that God promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Isaiah cried out, "For Zion's sake I will not be silent; for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest until her righteousness goes forth as brightness and her salvation as a lamp that burns."

Thank you, AIPAC. May God bless you and bless the United States of America and the nation of Israel in a bond that will never be broken. God bless you.