

Esther 5-7

As we fall back into the flow, and catch back up to the context you remember we're at "situation critical" at this point in our studies. And it all really stems from one man's pride and the bitterness that has just festered in him over the problem that he has with a single individual. But because of that a decree has gone out justifying the genocide of an entire nation. You recall that Haman had been exalted by the king to the position, really of being his right hand man, everyone was supposed to bow in his presence. But Mordecai (the Jew) refused to do so, we're not told the reasons exactly, but be it because Haman was an Amalekite (the sworn enemy of the Jews) or because quite frankly he just didn't like him we don't know. We do know that as you study Haman's character there was nothing *honorable* about him, nor does the bible mention a single thing good *concerning* him. But be that as it may, because of the fact that Mordecai refused to bow to him, man that just got under his skin, so he went to the king and basically accused the entire ethnic group of the Jews of being rebellious to the laws of the king. Now he didn't tell the king that it was the Jews specifically he just said that there was a certain people with in his kingdom who didn't submit to the king's laws. So he suggested to the king that they be put to death. And he offered the king about \$40 million to do it, well the king said, "If there's a people who won't follow the law, than do what you need to do, here's my signet ring." Haman made the decree, set it in motion, and on the 13th day of the 12th month it was going to be legal to kill any and every Jew you wanted to and whatever belonged to them you could keep for your reward.

As you can imagine that overwhelmed Mordecai and the rest of the Jews and so he sat in sackcloth and ashes everyday in front of the king's gate. Esther the Queen, (his cousin whom he raised as his daughter) sent to him to find out the deal, he told her, and said she should petition the king for their lives. Esther says, "Hey, I haven't been called into the king's presence in a month, and if I just show up uninvited, the penalty is death unless he holds out his golden scepter." Mordecai reminds her of the fact that she's a Jew just like the rest of them and encourages her with the perspective that death is eminent for us all, the bottom line is are we going to meet our end having served the Lord, or having served ourselves? and He strengthens her by in essence rehearsing for her the fact that she was just a lowly little orphan girl, a captive in a strange land, but here she is now the Queen of the most powerful man on earth, why do you think that is? and He tells her to consider why it is that she thinks she's there, there's a plan, a purpose for her being there, she's been placed there for a time such as this. So Esther responds by saying having all the Jews in the entire city fast for me for 3 days, then I'll go into the king at the risk of my own life and if I perish, I perish.

Now don't see that as blind fatalism, she was committing whole heartedly, unwaveringly, unrelentingly, with out reservation to what she perceived to be the will of God for her life even if it cost her life. A living sacrifice (if you will), be it by her life, or by her death, that God would be glorified, and others might perchance be saved. She was placing others above herself, and like we were reminded of in our devotion last week that's what the heart and mind of Christ is all about; others.

Vs1-2

I have no doubt that just before she stepped out with in view of the king her heart was racing, she took a deep breath, stepped forward and there he was, and what great relief came over her when he extended the scepter. We read in Vs 2 that when the kings saw her, she found *favor* in his sight.

Another way that might be translated is that she found, “grace” in his sight. When he extended that golden scepter he granted her (by grace) life, according to the law she deserved death, but in holding forth the scepter he extended grace. I’m sure you see where I’m going with this, God holds out the scepter of grace to a death deserving world today in the person of Jesus Christ We’ve all broken the law, we all deserve eternal separation, but in Christ God extends His scepter (if you will) of grace, of life. Jesus paid the penalty on our behalf, now God is extending to the earth the scepter of grace, and He beckons the world to come forth and touch it in Christ, to receive grace, to receive life. Esther (no doubt humbly) drew near to the king, touched the scepter and so found favor in his sight. The bible tells us, “*The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.*” Prov 21:1

Vs3-8

Now if you’ve read ahead you know what’s going to take place, but if you haven’t, when you read this you think, “What is she doing, why isn’t she telling him what’s going on?” Because he immediately issues her a blank check, “What would you like, you name it, and it’s done,” this phrase about ½ the kingdom was an expression that meant, “The sky is the limit, don’t be afraid to ask me anything because if it’s with in my power, consider it done.” and You’d think that the natural response would be to immediately say, “Haman has issued a decree for the eradication, the total annihilation, and the extermination of myself and all my people, and I’m here to beg for mercy, spare our lives and execute this wicked Haman.” But she doesn’t do that, instead she says, “Come to a banquet that I’ve prepared; you and Haman.” The king says, “Ok” so they go to a banquet of wine that she’s prepared for them, the king is still chomping at the bit to find out what’s on her heart, because he knows its serious whatever it is or else she wouldn’t have risked her life by coming into his presence having not been called for. So he asks her again, “What’s your petition, I’ll take care of it whatever it is.” and Again she stalls, she says, “Listen, if I’ve found favor in your sight, and it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, than do me the kindness of coming again tomorrow with Haman and I’ll tell you then.” I mean, this is risky, the king has asked you twice and twice you’ve declined him, he may begin to get frustrated, change his mind, decide he’s not into playing games and blow you off. It’s not like he hasn’t got a kingdom to run, there’s plenty to do on his daily routine I have no doubt. Some believe that she got cold feet, or perhaps she was being strategic somehow sensing it would be best to put it off. But it seems best to me if you follow the flow and keep in mind the overall emphasis of the book that what we’re seeing here is the sovereign hand of God intervening for reasons that she herself doesn’t even know yet. In her mind she may just not be able to get it out just yet, or maybe she has this overwhelming feeling that the timing just isn’t right so she begs for his patience in that way.

The bible says, “*A man's heart plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.*” Prov 16:9 In other words, her plan was tell the king what was going on, and she'd committed herself to the Lord accordingly, so by whatever means it happened in her emotionally we don't know, but the fact of the matter is that God was directing her sovereignly to hold out. He was directing her steps in perhaps a little bit different way than she'd originally planned. She herself may've been thinking, “What am I doing, Haman may be on to me, he might counteract my plan immediately...” But if your steps are being governed by the Lord, understanding that His ways aren't our ways it's only natural to realize then that there will be times when you don't always understand what exactly is going on in and around your life yourself. The proverbs remind us, “*A man's steps are of the LORD; How then can a man understand his own way?*”

Prov 20:24

Something else we do well to realize is that when it comes to a miraculous move of God 2 things need to converge in order to see that movement come into fruition. Not only do we need the *power*, but we also need the *permission*. You remember the man at the gate called Beautiful there in Acts Ch 3, we're told that he'd been lame from his mother's womb and that daily he was laid at the gate in order to beg alms. Translation: Peter and John had passed him by possibly hundreds of times before, for that matter Jesus had more than likely seen him there on numerous occasions, yet for all those times no miracle ever occurred on behalf of that man. Why? Was it a matter of power, well not for Christ, or for that matter even for Peter and John in that they were *in* Christ, filled and overflowing with the power Holy Spirit. So that point it wasn't a matter of power, but until this point the Lord hadn't granted them *permission*. There may be all kinds of things that are with in your *power* to do, opportunities that might be available to you, but with out *permission* from the Lord you can't move forward in them. For reasons that He's aware of that you and I aren't, here Esther has been granted the power, the king says, “Tell me what you want.” But for some reason she doesn't sense the permission to tell him what's on her heart, and we'll see why as the story progresses.

Vs9-12

There in Vs 11-12 Haman refers to himself some 6 times, everything *he has* and how great *he is* and the special favor given to no one but *him*, he's an important man. What does the bible say? “*Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.*” Prov 16:18 The scriptures warn that a man's pride will bring him low, and “*Before destruction the heart of a man is haughty,*” Prov 18:12 It's been said that pride is the only disease that makes everyone sick except for the one who has it. Getting puffed up, and full of self, all that I am, and all that I have, how essential it is to have *me* around, weird how this world ever survived with out you in the picture isn't it?

And I want you to notice what it is that he draws attention to.

The fact that he's an incredibly wealthy man, has a large/healthy family, an absolutely soaring career, having been promoted to the highest possible office in the world directly under the king himself, and on top of that he receives special status, receiving personal and confidential time with the king and queen themselves during dinner. Everything that's esteemed as success and having it all in this world, Haman had it. Now notice Vs 13.

Vs 13

I believe it was J. Vernon McGee who said you can always tell the measure of a man by the size of the things that irritate him. Haman has it all, yet he counts it as nothing as long as this one little Jewish guy doesn't bow before him, shows disrespect to him. You'd think that a man in his position, who had his platform, would be like, "Whatever, we're talking about one man in a sea of millions if not billions, you can't please everyone." But instead this one little man, Mordecai derails his entire life, he's not happy with everything he's got, he needs something more. What's my point? The flesh is never satisfied, the hole in man's heart can only be filled by Christ, contentment is found in Him alone. Drink of the waters of this world, you'll thirst again, but the man who takes in the living waters of the Holy Spirit that Christ gives shall never thirst, but shall become a *fountain* of living water springing up into everlasting life. You see the one who thirsts after the things of this world will never be filled, there's always one more thing we need to be truly happy, until we get it, than its something else. Contentment in our flesh is just ever out of our reach. But Jesus said, "*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.*" Matt 5:6 You see when you find your contentment in the person of Christ than all those other things are peripheral, non essential to the state of my inner being.

Remember Paul said, "...*I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*" Phil 4:11-13 Haman couldn't be happy as long as little ol' Mordecai was in the picture.

Vs14

So his wife gives him some friendly advise, "Have some gallows made, 75' high, and have Mordecai impaled, hung up on it in the morning, then you can digest your food a little better." We probably shouldn't be thinking of the gallows like a wooden contraption with a noose and a trap door, this is more than likely a giant beam that he's to be impaled upon.

But notice, now it begins to become clear to us why Esther was unable to get the information out earlier as to what Haman's plot was.

Ch 6

Vs1-3

It's been said that coincidence happens when God wishes to remain anonymous, the pieces of the puzzle begin to come together for us here, the providential hand of God is all over this occurrence. Just so happened on the night before Haman was going to ask for the death of Mordecai that the king couldn't sleep (be open to the Lord seeking your attention on sleepless nights), so the king thinks, "Nothing can put a man to sleep like a good ol' history book." So he calls for the chronicles of the kingdom to be read to him. Now there were volumes and volumes of books, and the fella who picked out from the library *just happened* to grab the one that held within it the record of Mordecai's saving of the king's life. And he *just happened* to be reading from the section of that happening, and then as he proceeded on to the next event the king goes, "Hey, I didn't hear any reward that we gave to him, what was done for him?" The guy says, "Nothing." Now that was a major blunder in governmental protocol, it was cheap life insurance, you do nothing and you're liable to get all kinds of enemies. So standard protocol was when you saved the life of the King, or uncovered a conspiracy, or whatever, you were rewarded generously. Mordecai got nothing, but now we're beginning to see God's hand in the whole mix, had Mordecai been rewarded back then, the king wouldn't have thought another thing about it, but now it's bothering him and he feels obligated to do something extra special for this guy who saved his life, *what a coincidence...* speaking of coincidence, notice Vs 4.

Vs 5-12

The tables begin to turn, what a death blow to Haman's pride. I mean it was killing him that Mordecai wouldn't bow before him, now he has to exalt Mordecai in the presence of the entire city in essence saying, "This guy is a personal favorite of the king, the king delights to honor him." So in reality he's now bowing before Mordecai before the entire city... But notice how Mordecai responded, did it change him? No, he went right back to his place before the gate seeking to send the signal of a radical wrong doing to the king. Haman however went back home with his head covered as though someone died, in mourning. I mean this guy was embarrassed, he went to the king to ask for a death sentence on Mordecai and instead he had to personally parade him around as a special honoree of the king. Now, you can't hardly do that and then go, "So can we kill him now?" It just wouldn't look right, ya know?

But what a test of character, think about it, everything Haman wanted for himself Mordecai got, and everything he wanted to do to Mordecai was coming down on him. How careful we should be regarding what we wish for, be for ourselves, or for others. What if the things you wished upon others came to you, how would you fare? Or what if all that you desired for yourself was poured out on someone else, how would you respond? Would you rejoice *for* them, or be eaten up with indignation *against* them?

Vs13

We read this and we think, "What happened to the gal that told him to build the gallows?" She's changed her tune in a radical way, yesterday she was saying, "Honey just have him put to death and you'll eat better." Today she's saying, "Enjoy your final meal because you're a dead man."

Vs14

And the tension continues to mount.

Ch7

Vs1-4

So the cat comes out of the bag, and notice the wisdom that she exemplifies, she doesn't speak about Haman, or act as though she's trying to tell the king what to do, she just humbly makes a plea for her life, and the life of her people and at that, only if it pleases the king, not for her, but if it pleases him.

Now I would imagine that about now the king's mind is reeling, he doesn't even know that she's a Jew, or for that matter that all the Jews are the people that Haman ordered executed. So Esther says, "All I want is my life to be spared," the king is thinking, "What are you talking about, "Your life to be spared? Who would presume to put to death my Queen?"

Vs5-7

I don't know who's shoes you should seek to see yourself in here, the king, or Haman, because they're both freaking out, but for completely different reasons. The king is in a rage, he know doubt looked at Haman and had the whole gambit of emotions surging through him. "You were supposed to be my right hand man, my confidant, trusted advisor, and you've duped me, made a fool of me, taken my trust in you and used it against me!" and On and on, so he storms out of the banquet hall into the garden, probably trying to collect his thoughts, his trust had been betrayed, Haman had been serving his own agenda right under his nose.

Haman on the other hand is freaking out because he probably didn't know that Esther was a Jew either, and now he's been accused of seeking to have her murdered, which adds up to his eminent death. So when the king storms out, he starts freaking out, and begging for his life before Esther, isn't it amazing how he responds in the light of *his* impending death sentence, now I'm not going to say that anything would've changed about his fate had they not been drinking. But once again I'll just state that spending time lingering at the wine never bears good fruit. People change when they've had a couple, you do things you wouldn't normally do, your equilibrium starts to slip, and apparently in his tipsiness mingled with his frantic panic he slipped and fell across the couch that Esther was reclining during the banquet.

Vs8

Which was a way of saying, "It's curtains for you." A man condemned to death wasn't worthy to look upon the king's face, but he comes in from trying to gather his thoughts and he sees Haman laying across his wife, and he says, "What now are you going to rape my wife right in front of my eyes!" and That's all the guards needed to hear, they're all over him. He's a dead man walkin.

Vs9-10

This is what we call “poetic justice.” Apparently you could see the stake that Haman had erected from the palace, one of the eunuchs says, “Hey he was going to have Mordecai hung up on that stake out there in his backyard.” The king says, “Stick him on it,” then the king was able to settle down. *“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”* Gal 6:7 The proverbs put it like this, *“Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, And he who rolls a stone will have it roll back on him.”* Prov 26:27

Be careful of the pits you dig, or the snares you set, because if you sow it, you’re guaranteed to reap it. Now before we close, one final point. Why did Haman have the gallows prepared in the 1st place, because of the advise of his friends and of his wife. Listen, gals you need to realize the weight of influence that you carry in your husbands lives. The odds of him being swayed greatly by your opinion are tremendous, be aware of that because you’ll stand accountable for that. And guys, consider well the advise that you’re willing to receive and weigh it out carefully in the balance of God’s Word, even if it comes from the well intentions of your wife. Do we need to hear our wives out? Absolutely, if we take her advise and it was completely wrong are we justified? Absolutely not, regardless of whose advise we take, consider it carefully in the balance of God’s Word. It never ceases to amaze me how that human nature has a tendency to want to justify itself. And in order to cover our tracks we’ll seek counsel, and we’ll keep seeking counsel till someone tells us what we want to do, then we say, “That bears witness.” When in reality they’re telling you that based upon the information you’ve given them from your point of view. We need people who’ll tell us what we need to hear regardless of what we want to hear and we need to seek counsel from people who are aware of the facts.

So be careful when seeking counsel, and when considering advise, don’t look for people to tell you what you want to hear, and regardless of what you hear, measure it up against the plumb line of the word of God and make sure its straight, because if not things can get real “Sticky” and you’re liable to get all hung up in the end.

Prayer Points:

Father we thank You for Your Word, how it applies so practically to our lives. Thank You for the assurance that You’re in control and that You’re timing is perfect. Help us to trust in You with all that we are, to lean not on our own understanding, to be led of Your Spirit, that we might be able to sense, not only the power that’s available *in* You, but when permission is given *from* You when You’d have to move in a certain direction for our lives. That we not walk in our own understanding, but trust in Your leading, and we thank You for the grace You’ve extended to us in the person of Jesus Christ