

Esther Series – A Bad Role Model Esther 1:1-22

Dave Shepardson, Calvary Chapel Nuevo / wordbymail.com

Last week we started the book of Esther, but we only did one verse. It was the theme verse of Esther. We took the entire message to talk about this one truth about God called “Providence.”

Here's what we said about providence. Esther is a picture – a type, an illustration, an unfolding – of the truth called providence. If we wanted to see providence worked out in a mini-series, we would watch Esther. That's why we dealt with providence to begin with.

We define providence as “*the loving care and governance that God exercises over the created universe.*” Providence is God's loving support and his guidance. It means he's there before we get there and he's guiding us through it. He goes before us; he hems us in behind, before, and on all sides.

God is at work leading, guiding, and providing in our lives. That's God's providence. It's for all of his creation including all of his children which means you, personally, if you belong to him today. If you don't belong to him, trust me – it's better if you do. Belong to him today and you'll see that he's been leading and guiding you all along.

Before we jump in, let me give you one more cool illustration of the word providence, because I couldn't fit it in last message. It actually is an introduction to the book because this illustration of providence comes from this oddity in the book of Esther.

Do you know that the book of Esther is the only book in the Bible that does not have the name of God in it? Ooh, that's weird. In the whole book, the name of God doesn't exist in the book of Esther. Wow, that's so weird. As I was preparing that message last week about providence I thought, "You know Lord, I wonder if that is an illustration of what providence is. That your name isn't listed in the book." If you think about it, that fact that God's name specifically isn't written in the book, illustrates how God works in our lives.

Let me explain it to you. When God works in your life, you very seldom see his defined hand, right? Very seldom do you clearly see the evidence of God. What you see is the effect of God. We don't see God's hand definitively. We see the effect. It's like Billy

Graham says, "You can't see the wind, but you can see the effects of the wind." DC Talk stole that so well so many years ago. You can't see the wind, but you can see the effects of the wind.

It's just like that in Esther. God is not named specifically, but you see him working at every turn and every event. He's leading, guiding, and providing and setting people up for his plan and his purpose but his name isn't specifically mentioned. It's the same in our lives. If we don't have that "read between the lines" kind of faith – if we say, "Show me God and I'll believe." Someday you'll see him, trust me. If you want to wait to believe until you see Jesus Christ, you will get your opportunity to see him, but it will be too late to believe. So don't wait.

Look between the lines and see God is at work. Do you know what? That's God. That wasn't chance. That wasn't coincidence. That was God. What's going on in my life, God is working and he's leading, guiding, and providing. He's gone before me. He's already set up that circumstance so when I get there I'll have an out. I'll have an answer. I'll have a support. But you'll never see the defined hand of God. That way, it takes what we call faith to believe, which just happens to be your only way into heaven. So begin to exercise faith and see God at work in your lives. Does it make sense?

Let's pray and then we'll jump in.

Heavenly Father, please as we continue to try to jump into Esther, Lord, we pray that you would just reveal this incredible truth of how you lead, guide, provide – how you set us up Lord, how you've gone before us, you've already set our path Lord. You already have an answer, God. Show us, Lord, that you're at work in what we think are the mundane circumstances of life, God. Show us as we watch Esther unfold, Lord, that's it's a picture of our life and it's a picture of you working in our lives, God.

We pray you bring up in our minds the specific circumstances right now that you're working in. That we would leave this place with some peace that we are not alone, that you've not left us or forgotten us. You're not hidden, Lord, but you are actively and powerfully at work for your purposes, for your glory, and for our ultimate good, God. Show us that today, Lord. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

Let's just do one little quick thing before we get in okay? I just thought it would be cool to give you a little history from Ruth to Esther. Ruth to Esther, 600 years. In the Bible we're like, "Okay. I turned 30 pages, that's 600 years." But 600 years is a long time. Anybody here 600 years old? Okay, I thought maybe a few. No, I didn't. Don't take it personal.

600 years is a long time. Here's the point. There's a big difference between Ruth 600 years ago and Esther today. Let's go through it real quick. Ruth occurred in the dark ages of Israel. The time of the judges when every man did what was right in his own eyes. That was an ugly, rough, terrible, despicable time for Israel but at least they were in their own land. That was the dark ages of the judges. Following those dark ages came the monarchy and especially King David, Israel's greatest king.

Now we're at the high point of the Old Testament history, of the nation of Israel as David is their greatest king and then he turns over the nation to Solomon, his son, who builds the great temple that's never really, truly been replicated. After Solomon, he turns the nation over to his son, but now there's not that unity, and so the nation of Israel splits into two factions and becomes a divided kingdom.

If you ever wonder what happens to a church that splits, save the grace of God, you just look at what happened when the nation of Israel split. They split into two kingdoms – the northern and the southern. When they did that, they spent 200 years fighting one another. Sound like any church you've been to? "Yeah, we been fighting one another for 200 years." "Oh really? You're just like the nation of Israel." I know it's like nervous funny because we know that's what we do. We split into these factions and then we fight each other.

Guess what was happening when the nation of Israel was fighting each other for 200 years? They were seriously falling away from God, which happens every time a church starts fighting one another or itself. They fall away from God because their focus is fighting that other person. That's what happened to the nation of Israel. God warned them over and over and over through some of the greatest prophets, including Isaiah. "If you

don't repent from this, there will be consequences to this sin." They said, "Aahh, we don't think so." God said, "Consequence time."

They were invaded, subdued, and carried off as prisoners into foreign lands because of their sin.

They end up in what we call the Babylonian captivity. Now all of Israel is captive to the Babylonian Empire – Assyria and to Babylon. That lasts until God says, "Enough." God has Persia (remember that) take over the Babylonian Empire and then the Persian kings (really Cyrus but then on) released the Jews to go back to their homeland. "Hey, you guys can go. you're kind of a pain anyway. you don't really spend any money. you're always trying to get a better deal on stuff." What? I'm not stereotyping. It's in there in the Hebrew. "Why don't you go back to your own land?"

In the book of Ezra, they start to go back to their own land – but just a small portion. Why? Because most of them were really enjoying living in the world. you know the Old Testament has absolutely no application to today, does it? Most of them didn't go back to the land God had given them because they were enjoying living in the world of Persia. I don't know if that relates to the church or not, but a small remnant had gone back and they weren't doing that good. Nehemiah had not yet taken back the second or third wave to rebuild the walls, which really started the rebuilding of the nation.

Esther occurs when a small group had gone back. They all could go back, but they had not chosen to. In fact, they had chosen to stay in the world instead of go back. Esther occurs right in that spot where the Jews have chosen to live in the Persian world and they're about to get wiped out and God providentially steps in to save an entire nation. Cool history, right? 600 years transpired in those two minutes of history. That's a lot of time. What's the point?

The point is that God was at work in Ruth and he is at work in Esther, and he is at work today. 600; 1,200; 2,000 years, it does not matter. God is still at work. Same plan, same purpose, different environment. What does it mean to you? It means that God is at work. No matter where you're at now, no matter where you've been, and no matter where you're going, God is at work. Same plan, same purpose. Let's dive in.

Esther 1:1 *“Now in the days of Ahasuerus, the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia over 127 provinces.”* King Ahasuerus was his Hebrew name. His Greek name was Xerxes. All the cool Bible translations use Xerxes because it's a cool name. They make movies with Xerxes. The ESV says Ahasuerus because it's a literal translation, so we'll say Ahasuerus. It's harder to say. This guy is a super powerful king.

Here's a map to get an idea the size of his kingdom. Look at the pink area. Just look at the stretch. Just try to imagine how much space this is. It stretches from the edge of India to the edge of Ethiopia; which really, today, is like northern Sudan which is interesting. Right across the middle of all that pink that was the Persian Empire are some nations that maybe you've heard about: Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, and Iraq. Any of those nations have something in common? All those nations are in the Persian Empire.

As it wraps around, it encompasses Israel on its way down to Ethiopia or Sudan. It's a huge empire. It's so big that it split into 127 provinces and each province has its own governor. It is massive. Does it give you an idea of how big an area we're talking about? This guy is a power king. he is a powerful king. 127 provinces, absolutely one of the largest kingdoms ever.

As Esther opens up, this king decides he needs to strut his stuff for his empire. It's not enough that he controls it. he's got to put it on display. He's got to display his wealth and his power and in a palace in the city of Susa, the citadel where Nehemiah will eventually be sent from Susa from Artaxerxes (Xerxes' son because Xerxes is an idiot and gets killed), and so his son takes over. Well, he did get killed because he's an idiot. You'll see. You'll see it all pan out.

Anyway, his son sends Nehemiah from this same place, Susa, back to Jerusalem a few years later. But right now, all of his pomp, all of his splendor, has to get put on display. He decides to put on one barn burner of a party. I mean a Guinness world record party. I was thinking about the longest party I'd ever experienced. I probably shouldn't tell you about it, but I'm going to. My brother and I are like 16, 17 and my parents get this ridiculous idea that they can go to Hawaii for a week and leave us home.

We had to clean the carpets; we had to repair drywall. We had holes in the drywall. We had holes in the ceiling by the end of that week! You'll see how it applies. I was old enough, though. I knew how to handle it. Like I said, I wish I would have heard this message...

Esther 1:2 ***“in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on his royal throne in Susa, the citadel. Esther 1:3 “in the third year of his reign he gave a feast (read that, “party to end all parties) for all his officials and servants. The army of Persia and Media and the nobles and governors of the provinces (that’s 127) were before him (and they all come with an entourage).” This is serious, serious party invitation. Esther 1:4 “while he showed (read that, “showed off”) the riches of his royal glory and the splendor and pomp of his greatness...”***

Have you ever met someone like that? “You're just showing the splendor and pomp of your greatness, aren't you?” That's this king. I'd like to just call him “King A,” but I'm afraid you might get something else in your mind if I do that. You'll see by the end of this story.

King Ahasuerus is showing off the riches of his royal glory and the splendor and pomp of his greatness for many days. How many days? 180 days. I thought my little seven-day bender when my parents were in Hawaii was big. 180 days. This guy is on an all-out party for this entire kingdom. 127 provinces and all their governors and their entourages. Like I said, a Guinness Book of World Record – definitely a record-setting party.

The Bible doesn't tell us, but history tells us why. During this time, “King A” was preparing to invade Greece and it's a big deal because Greece was the other half of the world he didn't already control.

He was preparing to invade Greece, so this whole party had kind of a PR party purpose because he needed all of his leaders, all of his military leaders, all of his government leaders to join him in his desire to rule the world. So he brings them all in and he keeps them drunk for six months so that he can get them all under his wing so he can influence them with his wealth, power, and alcohol so that they'll agree when he tries to get into Greece. Remember that. We'll return it.

It's a huge PR party campaign. After partying for six months of barn-burner splendor and opulence and “bring everybody in and impress them with my wealth,” he's going to wrap it up with a seven-day rave for the whole city of Susa. It's right here in your Bible.

Esther 1:5 ***“And when these days were completed, the king gave for all the people present in Susa the citadel, both great and small, a feast lasting for seven days in the court of the garden of the king's palace.”***

We talked a little bit about this court of the garden last message. This thing is the size of three football fields side to side. That's the size of this court of the garden which was just an outer court of the palace. It would be like you having a patio made of marble and jewels the sizes of three football fields out in the front of your house. It's a big place. It's a big party.

Esther 1:6 ***“There were white cotton curtains and violet hangings fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rods and marble pillars*** (these marble pillars have actually been discovered and it's just a phenomenal display of architectural extravagance), ***and also couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry*** (kind of a unique red marble), ***marble, mother-of-pearl and precious stones.***” That's what you walk on, alright – marble, pearl, and precious stones. That's the pavement for your feet – the size of three football fields.

Esther 1:7 ***“Drinks were served in golden vessels*** (really? What are they out of the plastic throw-away cups?), ***vessels of different kinds, and the royal wine was lavished according to the bounty of the king.***” What that means is that he lavished the royal wine on the people to show off his bounty – to show what he could do; to show that he had the means, power, and the ability to party for six months with all of his leaders in this huge empire. Plus, just pour out as much wine as the whole city can possibly drink for seven solid days in a party the size of three football fields.

Do you have it in your mind? I'm trying to give you a little bit of a picture here because it's pretty important. It's an all-out display of opulence and kingship. It's designed to bring

all the people under his influence, under his control so that they'll agree when he decides to attack and try to take over Greece.

Esther 1:8 ***“And drinking was according to this edict: ‘There is no compulsion.’*** (Which some people say, “Oh that means people didn't have to drink.” No, it means that they didn't have to stop drinking.) ***For the king had given orders to all the staff of his palace to do as each man desired.***” Which literally means as little or as much but trust me, if you've been in the world partying like this with the royal wine flowing, not too many people except for Christians (Christ followers) would pass on this kind of an event. The alcohol is flowing.

Esther 1:9 ***“Queen Vashti also gave a feast for the women in the palace that belonged to King Ahasuerus.”*** So, there's this wild party going on in this courtyard and then in some other part of the palace, Queen Vashti has all of the women. That's not because that in the Persian culture, the women weren't allowed to party with the men. It's not like, “Men party here; women party over there.”

Here's what's going on here. At the point of what we would call “drunken stupor,” the women who had self-respect, decency, and a little common sense would get the heck out. They would just say, “Okay, girls. We've had enough. We need to go over here and we just need to watch some TV and play some Parcheesi or something because it's not safe here anymore. There are a whole bunch of men here who have been drinking for six months. We don't want to be here.”

So there were women involved in the party. They were primarily concubines and prostitutes. All of the women of any kind of decency and respect would be pulled out by their own common sense. That's the picture. Here's the king's first huge mistake.

Let me just say this. Anyone who parties like this is absolutely guaranteed to eventually make some seriously bad choices. Anyone who parties like this is absolutely, positively going to make some seriously negative, life-changing choices. Do you agree? Here's are “King A's”.

Esther 1:10, ***“On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine (we read that “drunk”), he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha and Abagtha, Zethar and Carkas, the seven eunuchs (poor guys) who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus,”***

So seven days into the rave after a six month party, the king is merry with wine – he's drunk. He says to the seven eunuchs in verse 11, ***“to bring Queen Vashti before the king with her royal crown (remember those words), in order to show the peoples and the princes her beauty, for she was lovely to look at (interpret that “lust over”).”***

So seven days into the final rave, the king decides, “Go get the queen. Bring her crown and parade her up and down in front of all these drunken men.”

Let me just ask you two questions to help you understand the application. If you've ever battled alcohol (and I thank God there are people in this room who have never battled alcohol), I want to ask you two questions. Number one, have you ever made a really good decision while you were drunk? No. Second question: have you ever made a really regretful decision while you were drunk? Yes, right? What is it with this poison that we call alcohol?

We know that we will never make a wise decision when we are influenced by alcohol. So many of us live with the regrets of decisions that we have made while under the influence of alcohol, and yet we just invite it in. “Come. Destroy my life just like the TV said to do.” We invite it in because on TV, it doesn't show the throwing up, violence, homelessness, divorce, destruction that *is* alcohol. And we buy it; we believe it. So many of us have made those regretful decisions.

Have you ever heard that term “stupid drunk”? Those two words “stupid” and “drunk” are inseparable. When you are drunk, you are stupid and you are going to make stupid choices and do stupid things that you will regret the rest of your life. I guarantee it. You will never find someone who has battled alcohol that says, "Oh yeah, it's no big deal. I made some of my best choices flat-out plastered." Never.

Just to clarify so I don't get too many e-mails, the Bible does not specifically prohibit the drinking of alcohol. But the Bible does incredibly (overdone) warn us about the guaranteed destruction of being drunk. Guaranteed. Do you know how God exists? That's how sure destruction is with alcohol. It's the same level of guaranteed assurance. Get drunk; destroy life. It has happened to so many, and so many in this room have recovered from the destruction of the abuse of alcohol.

It doesn't say you can't have a beer with your pizza or wine with your lasagna. That's not what I'm talking about. I'm not trying to split hairs with you. I'm telling you, get drunk; destroy your life. When are we going to learn this? How many millions of lives have to be destroyed by alcohol before we finally say, "You know what? I think it might be the liquor." Oh, my gosh. Back to our story.

Queen Vashti is safely at the other end of the palace where she should be. King Pig Head is (it's better than "King A").... King Ahasuerus is tying on one last bender. he gets this idea, "Hey, tell the eunuchs to go get Queen Vashti and parade her in front of all these drunken and lustful men in her royal crown because she's got a great body and that's what we want to see." What the king's really saying is, "I want these men to lust after her and to know that I own her." There's a good idea for a wife.

Do you think Hugh Hefner was the first guy to parade pretty women in front of lustful men and then say, "I own them"? Which, by the way, is the entire Playboy enterprise. "I own the women that you lust after." That's power. Do you realize that there's an entire segment of our culture that is built on this? The display of women owned by men to prove something – some level of success or control or something.

This was disgusting in 500 B.C.; it's disgusting today. What you need to see is that it's been going on since 500 B.C. This isn't just since the hippy movement in the 60s. No, sin started this. Sin nature started this.

King Ahasuerus says, "Bring her in her crown. We need to have a little excitement here." There are some Hebrew scholars, especially, that say that between the lines here, that there's a chance that he's saying bring her *only* in her crown. It's a serious situation.

Fortunately, Queen Vashti is not drunk. Good for her. She decides to keep her dignity and decides to not flaunt her body, and in verse 12 we give her huge accolades. Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command delivered by the eunuchs. Apparently, she sends him back the international hand signal for, "No way, you idiot." Some of you must know that international hand signal. Personally, I'm not sure what it is, but I think she sent it back to him and said, "Give this to the king to let him know I'm not coming."

This is nothing about respect. "Oh, she's not submitted to her husband." That's crap – sorry, that's dung. This is not about submitting to her husband. It's not about respecting the king. This is nothing about authority. This is about a wife who has enough class, decency, and self-respect to give her drunken husband the bird – and I'm not talking about parrot. "No. I'm not going to do that. You're an idiot and you're drunk." That's what's going on here.

Unfortunately, what happens generally when a drunk husband who thinks he rules the world gets a dose of reality from his sober and decent wife? Here's what happens. Drunken lust turns into vengeful anger. "Oh, I saw this ad on TV that said that if I drink, my drunken lust will turn into vengeful anger! Where can I get me some of that?" It makes so much sense when you see it for what it is.

Esther 1:12, "But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command delivered by the eunuchs. At this the king became enraged, and his anger burned within him."

How often does drunken fun turn into vengeful anger? Very often. If you've battled alcohol, you know what I'm saying. Drunken fun turns into vengeful anger. The ads we see on TV? Fast forward three hours and see where those people are. you're like, "Eww."

Same thing 2,500 years ago. Nothing's changed. How long is it going to take us to learn? 2,500 years? What? Do you want another 100 years to learn this? I'm not being – well, I am being – cynical and sarcastic because our culture destroys itself with alcohol. We're like, "It's only be 2,500 years, man. It might still actually be good for us."

So the Persian king has been on a six month bender and now he's enraged by his wife's self-respect and decency. So what does he do? He turns to his wise men and says, "What

should we do with this woman?" Esther 1:13 ***"Then the king said to the wise men who knew the times (for this was the king's procedure toward all who were versed in law and judgment,"*** Esther 1:14 ***"the men next to him being Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media,*** (This is important because these seven princes kind of form the brain trust for King Ahasuerus. Just like our president has a brain trust, King Ahasuerus did.) ***who saw the king's face, and sat first in the kingdom."***

These guys like their position. They've been with the king all six months. They're drinking just like him so they're all drunk and the king looks at them and says, "What do you think we ought to do with this woman who won't parade in here for us to lust after her body?" (I don't know what that was an impersonation of, but I liked it.)

King Ahasuerus, please hear me, was prideful, arrogant, easily influenced, made rash decisions, and was easily angered – especially under the influence of alcohol. Now in his drunken anger, the king has got to do something to save his ego and his reputation. This whole deal was about showing his control over the empire and now his wife is going to dispute that? Welcome to marriage, king. The whole kingdom might be with you, but your wife will tell you the truth. Amen, wives? Come on. Do you want to keep that a secret? You can fool everybody, but you cannot fool your wife.

So he looks at these guys and one of the guys, "I know what to do." This is called fear-mongering. Esther 1:16 ***"Then Memucan said in the presence of the king and the officials*** (look for the over-dramatic "all". The word "all" tells you that somebody is just being overboard), ***"Not only against the king has Queen Vashti done wrong, but also against all the officials*** (that's them) ***and all the peoples who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus."*** Esther 1:17 ***"For the queen's behavior will be made known to all women*** (What? Are they going to be tweeting? "Hey did you get that tweet from Queen Vashti? Facebook page. Queen Vashti put it on her Facebook this morning.") How in the world are all the women in all the provinces of this kingdom going to hear about this? It's a little overboard), ***causing them to look at their husbands with contempt, since they will say, 'King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, and she did not come.'"***

Esther 1:18 ***"This very day the noble women of Persia and Media*** (Guess who's wives those are? These seven bozos that are giving him the advice. These are their wives.) ***who have heard of the queen's behavior will say the same to all the king's officials*** (That's these guys sitting around the king. "We don't all want our wife to get this crazy idea that she can be respectful and disregard our drunken lustful request. We don't want that getting out."), ***and there will be contempt and wrath in plenty.***" This is overboard. This is a drunken adviser giving stupid advice to a drunk king. That's what happening here.

His wise advice continues. Esther 1:19 ***"If it please the king, let a royal order go out from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes so that it may not be repealed*** (notice that because it's very important. If this king makes a law about this stupid event, it will not be able to be repealed. It will be a permanent law in the kingdom), ***that Vashti is never again to come before King Ahasuerus. And let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she.***"

A turn in the story.

Esther 1:20 ***"So when the decree made by the king is proclaimed throughout all his kingdom, for it is vast*** (here's what will happen if this decree is made), ***all women will give honor to their husbands, high and low alike.***"

Listen, either this guy is not married or he is really drunk to think that if the king makes this kind of a law. "Hey did you hear? President Obama won't let Michelle into his presence." "Oh, that makes me honor my husband so much. Oh, that makes me love my husband so much."

I won't use President Obama; I'll use King Ahasuerus. "King Ahasuerus's wife had self-respect and decency and so the king banished her forever. Oh, I love my husband." This is stupid advice, right? Just because you read it in the Bible, doesn't mean you that you should apply it to your life. This is the difference between what we call descriptive and prescriptive. Descriptive means this is what happened and it was stupid. Prescriptive means this is what you should do.

This is not what you should do, this is descriptive. Here's my point. Is God at work in it? Yes. In a six month, all empire, knockdown drag-out, drunken debauchery party, is God at work in it? We're not just reading an episode of "Jersey Shores". I've never seen "Jersey Shores." I don't want to. I shouldn't even be saying it up here. Is that it? Should I like edit that out, put "Gilligan's Island" in? Listen, this isn't an episode of "Desperate Housewives." I don't know; I don't watch any of that junk.

This is God's providence in the midst of debauchery. This is God's providence at work. Two things that I need you to see for later. Number one, in verse 19 it says, "***Let it be written in the laws so it may not be repealed.***" That means once the king speaks, it cannot be repealed. That's an important key in the providential role of this king – even though he's an idiot – for the people of God.

Number two, at the end of verse 19, look at this sentence. This drunken king, wife won't come out in her crown. "I know, I know. Banish her from your presence and pick a new queen." Do you see it? Now who do you think that might end up being? Read ahead later. Here's my point. Is God at work in ugly, worldly, sinful, debauchery? Are you kidding? How can God be at work in that? Do you think it shocks him? Do you think your sin shocks God? Do you think he steps out of the room when you're sinning? There's no sin you can commit that God isn't with you. What do you mean by "with me, Dave"? I mean with you. I mean right there with you. Think about it.

There are two things I want you to see about the providence coin as we wrap up. Number one, everything that's going on here is wrong. Everything that's going on here is absolutely, 100%, completely wrong. Here's a question: Does that dethrone God? No. That does not dethrone God.

You think, "What about the sinful choices in my life? God must be beside himself. There's no way he can fix..." No, listen. There is no level of sin that dethrones God. God is still at work.

Here's the second thing you have got to know. The number two point is: Just because God is at work in the midst of sin, doesn't mean it's okay for you to be in it. Amen?

Here's one of the problems with what we'll call hyper providence. That's just a politically correct term. Here's the problem with hyper providence: "Well, if God's going to work it all out, then I can go ahead and sin it up. I can go ahead and do what I want, party it up, and I know God's going to work it all out." Listen carefully. God's plan will work out. God's plan will come to pass. But whether or not you are part of it has to do with your choices. Do you hear that? You are not going to dethrone God.

God is not going to be unable to accomplish his plan because of your sin. What happens is he moves you to the curb and says, "Okay, you get to choose sin. It's your choice. You can destroy your life and it's okay because I got a million people behind you that I can use just as easy as you. So if you want to destroy your life, it's your freewill. I'll use somebody else who seeks me and desires to be used by me." Do you see it?

That's the truth of God's providence. You will not dethrone God's plan. you will not stop his purpose, but you will remove yourself from being used by him. It's not pretty at the curb. It's not pretty there. A lot of alcohol flows there. Pretty big lessons here. Amen?

The prideful king and his bruised ego get council from an over-dramatic adviser and after six months of pumping up his pride and ego with alcohol, his wife just deflates him with her decency and all of a sudden the advisor's council sounds good to an impulsive, hasty, drunken, angry king.

Esther 1:21 ***"This advice pleased the king and the princes, and the king did as Memucan proposed."*** Esther 1:22 ***"he sent letters to all the royal provinces, to every province in its own script and to every people in its own language, that every man be master in his own household*** (wives, if your husband is underlining that, smack him right now. I don't want any man underlining that sentence. It's Descriptive. It's not prescriptive.) ***and speak according to the language of his people."***

The NLT helps us tremendously there. It pulls out the sense of it: and let him say "whatever he pleases." Oh, my gosh. Now we've got this alcoholic, angry, prideful, egotistical, pompous, pinhead king making a crazy law saying that every man should be the master of his own household and he should be able to say whatever he wants.

Now listen, men. Before you go underline that and say, "Hey honey, it's in the Bible. Pastor Dave showed me where I'm supposed to be the master of my house and say whatever I want," let me just remind you if I haven't gotten it across. This guy is a prideful, arrogant, angry, drunken pinhead of a role model. So if that's the role model you're looking for, you got it. If you say, "I want to pattern my life after that idiot," there's your role model. The only other thing I'd suggest is put a divorce lawyer on retainer so you don't have to wait when you call for your appointment. This guy's a bad role model. I don't know if you've figured that out, but that's the point I was trying to get at subtly.

So Vashti is banished from the king's presence and she's like, "Where's the punishment? This is cool man. I get to live in the palace and I don't have to go see that pompous pinhead. This is the best of all worlds." Vashti really wins and it's cool because her son becomes the next king of Persia. That's kind of cool, too. Some say she was pregnant during this time so she was never able to see the king. And that might have been why she wouldn't strut her stuff for all the men.

The point is that God is at work in a bad situation. What lessons have we learned in between the lines? What lessons have we learned today in between this stage-setting providential story? This set the stage for the rest of the book. I hope you see that. Let's learn some lessons as we go away.

Proverbs 25:28 *"A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls."* That's King A – no self-control like a broken down city with no walls. you can write these down, men.

Proverbs 16:32 *"Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city."* Again, our king strikes out in the wisdom category. He's quick to anger, especially when alcohol is involved. He's not ruling his own spirit at all.

Our grand finale wisdom scripture. Proverbs 16:18 *"Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."*

Do you remember I told you that King Ahasuerus was going to invade Greece? Guess what? He did... and they whooped his butt. He actually had a throne set up to watch the battle and the Grecian army just took out the Persian army like they weren't there and it set him up to be assassinated. Perfect.

It all works out in the end. ***"Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."*** But you still have the choice. You can be prideful and haughty, just know where the road leads and make sure that's where you want to end up. If the Holy Spirit were to convict you and say, "Wow. I think that joker might be a role model for me." Change it. Change it today.

Here's your verse. Write it down, memorize it, live it, breathe it. I'll put it up in the NLT so I don't have to explain it. Romans 12:2, ***"Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect."***

God help us. God help us to not be conformed to this world, but to allow him to change the way we think and to renew our minds that we'll be able to know his will that's pleasing and perfect. We'll be able to be part of his plan. We'll be able to be part of his purpose and we'll join him in a battle that the victory's already won. We'll ride in that triumph and glory with him.

Or go out and get drunk. It's your choice. Choose wisely. Let's pray.

God help us. Help us choose wisely. Sometimes Lord, a bad example hits us hard, especially Lord if we relate. I pray you protect hearts in the room and hearts listening, Lord that would deny, deflect, rationalize, justify, and squirm. I pray Lord that we would see that if there's anything in us like this king, may you crush it, obliterate it, remove it. May you change us, change the way we think, change the way we feel, change the way we see things, Lord. Don't let us buy into the lie of the enemy that leads to destruction, God.

Keep us on the straight and narrow, Lord – longing for you, reaching for you, striving for you. Running, Lord, for the prize. Our eyes set on the prize – the upward call of God and

Christ Jesus, Lord. Give us the marathon focus, Lord, and let us run until we see you face-to-face, God. Pray you convict us.

If you're here today and you need to say, "Lord, save me," it's the best prayer in the Bible. When Peter's drowning and he's sinking in the water, as he goes under he says, "Lord save me." With just his fingers stretched out of the storm, Jesus reaches down and grabs him and pulls him up. Maybe that's you today. Maybe you're going under for the third time. If so, man, call out to God. Say, "Lord save me. Save me from the destruction of this world. Change my life, make me part of your plan and your purpose. Fill me with your spirit. Save me from my sin, Lord." In Jesus' name, Amen.