

A person is walking away from the viewer down a path in a dense forest. The scene is misty or foggy, with light filtering through the trees. The overall tone is dark and atmospheric. The person is in the center of the frame, walking away into the distance.

ESTHER

GOD'S PROVIDENCE IN AN EVIL DAY

If It Pleases the King

Both of them



The Great Paradox

God is omnipotently present
even where God is most
conspicuously absent.

Important Lesson - Irony

Regardless of what circumstances suggest “in the moment,” God is consistently ruling human (our) history with purposeful intent and unquestioned power.

The Structure of Feasts

- A¹ Xerxes' banquet for the empire (1:2-4)
- B¹ Xerxes' banquet for the men of Susa (1:5-8)
- C¹ Esther's coronation banquet (2:18)
 - D¹ Esther's first banquet for the king and Haman (5:1)
 - E¹ Turning Point (6:1-2)
 - D² Esther's second banquet for the king and Haman (7:1)
- C² Feasting for Mordecai's promotion (8:17)
- A² The first day of Purim feasting in the empire (9:17)
- B² The second day of Purim feasting in Susa (9:18)

Esther's Plea (1-6a)

1. For the third time King Xerxes offers Esther any wish (vs. 1-2).
2. Esther's Masterful Plea (3-6a) - She has to incite the king's wrath against Haman, not her, without placing blame on the king who signed the decree.
 - Petition/request – My life/my people
 - Quotes Haman's edict (cf. 3:13), but passively, setting up the king's question (think Nathan - 2 Sam 12)
 - Communicates humility and deference to Xerxes
 - "A man hateful and hostile! This wicked Haman!"

Two Men Trapped (7:6b-10)

1. Xerxes is trapped by his own signed edict. His personal weakness is exposed. He is in a quandary (7a).
2. Haman is trapped by his hubris (7b – 10).
 - Haman knows Xerxes. He knows his only hope is Esther.
 - Harem protocol – No man was to alone with a member of the harem, and no man was to be within seven feet at any time. For Haman to fall on her couch is unthinkable.
 - Haman solves the king's problem. He can now be killed for assaulting the queen.
 - Haman is impaled on his own gallows.

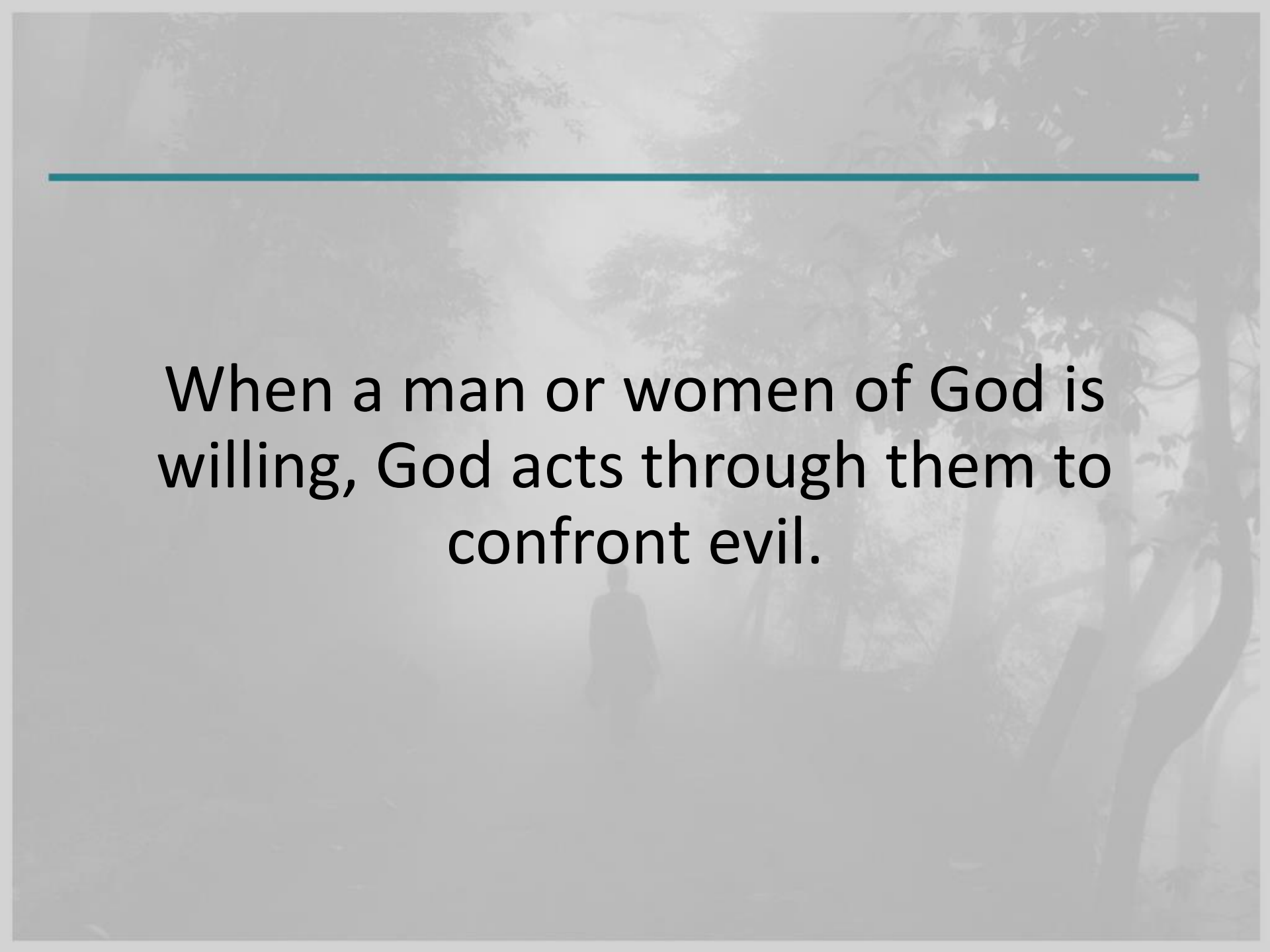
Lessons for the Marketplace

1. Human evil exists for a season.

- Evil is self-deceptive. Haman boasted of his desired honor, yet dressed Mordecai. He misunderstood his relationship with the queen. He built his own deathtrap.
- Evil is always set against God. God is goodness and righteousness.
- Evil men can be used by God for good. Both Xerxes and Haman are tools for a greater good.
- Evil is ultimately completely destroyed. Saints are justified in crying out “How long?”

Lessons for the Marketplace

2. God fulfills His promises through willing people.
 - The confrontation in the story is between an Agagite and the offspring of Kish(1 Sam 10:20-21; Esther 2:5).
 - Saul failed to do the word of God (I Sam 15:3, 8-23).
 - Key question in the story: Would another leader fail to fulfill the word of God? Especially a seemingly weak woman during a time of exile?
 - Compare Saul versus Esther



When a man or women of God is
willing, God acts through them to
confront evil.

A person is walking away from the viewer down a path in a dense forest. The scene is misty and atmospheric, with tall trees and thick foliage. The lighting is soft and diffused, creating a sense of mystery and solitude. The person is in the center of the frame, walking away from the viewer.

ESTHER

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