

Reversing the Irreversible

Esther 8

Well, tell me, do you notice a pattern throughout scripture? There was NOTHING; God said, "Let there be..." and there was EVERYTHING. Abraham and Sarah were childless, ANCIENT, and BARREN, but God said, "***Your descendants will outnumber the stars in the sky and the sand on the shores.***" Israel was enslaved; then God said, "Let My People go!" They departed from Egypt, but they were trapped by the Red Sea; so, God moved it. Time and again Israel was surrounded and outnumbered in battle, but they still prevailed because GOD fought for them. David should've been a smear on Goliath's shoe. Daniel should've have been lion chow, and Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego should've been toast, but God made the impossible inevitable.

This was Queen Esther's heritage, and now she and her people faced extermination. The king's edict was IRREVERSIBLE, but her God was and is a God of reversals. So far, we've seen that...

- Esther hadn't been summoned, but she was received...
- Haman was going to have Mordecai executed, but God had Mordecai honored and Haman executed...

Esther 8 verse 1 picks up saying...

Esther 8:1-2

1 On that day King Ahasuerus gave to Queen Esther the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had told what he was to her. 2 And the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.

There were no chapter and verse divisions when this was written. We pick up EXACTLY where we left off last week with the execution of Haman. It was a common practice in the ancient near east to redistribute the wealth of an executed traitor. Upon the execution of Haman, his *estate* has been handed over to the queen, who then charged Mordecai to oversee it.

Another REVERSAL!

Just the day before, Haman was boasting about his wealth and status, and plotting to execute Mordecai. The next day he's dead on the gallows he had build for Mordecai, and Mordecai is in charge of all his estate. Folks, that couldn't have been tied up any prettier with a bow!

When the king finds out that Mordecai, who already saved his life, is Queen Esther's cousin (and adoptive father), he doesn't hesitate giving him his signet ring, the sign of his authority.

Now, I doubt the king climbed the 75 foot tall gallows to retrieve his ring, which means Haman was alive when he took it back. He just missed seeing that given to Mordecai too.

Another REVERSAL.

However, even with Haman dead, there was still a PROBLEM...

Esther 8:3-6

3 Then Esther spoke again to the king. She fell at his feet and wept and pleaded with him to avert the evil plan of Haman the Agagite and the plot that he had devised against the Jews. 4 When the king held out the golden scepter to Esther, 5 Esther rose and stood before the king. And she said, If it please the king, and if I have found favor in his sight, and if the thing seems right before the king, and I am pleasing in his eyes, let an order be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, which he wrote to destroy the Jews who are in all the provinces of the king. 6 For how can I bear to see the calamity that is coming to my people? Or how can I bear to see the destruction of my kindred?

What was the problem? NOTHING HAD CHANGED! Back at the banquet, the queen had asked for the king to spare her life and the lives of her people, but all that had happened was the execution of Haman! His edict was still in effect! Once again she brought her petition to the king, except this time she doesn't even ask for herself; her concern is solely for her people.

What's this a picture of? A person is making a request of the king on behalf of others. INTERCESSION, right? It would've been easy for Esther to return to asking the king to spare her life. I mean, the cat was out of the bag; the Queen was a Jew, and there were no social status exemptions in Haman's edict. She needed to be saved too!

However, she asked only for her people. The most important qualifier in making her request was asking, "**If it please the king,**" which we ask in our prayers when we say, "If it's Your will, Lord." This is how we ought to always pray, and not as a "cop out." So often people attach "if it's Your will" to a prayer, *HOPING* that it's will, but not knowing for sure, and partially doubting that God will hear and answer their prayer. However, John says...

1 John 5:14

And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.

The more we understand and walk in the will of God, the more confident our prayer lives will be and the more *REAL* our relationship will be with the Father as we walk together, receiving the things for which we ask or receiving grace to keep following Him when we don't. Like Esther, we seek first and foremost to pray the will of God.

However, did you see how she kind of primed her request with herself? **"...if I have found favor in [the king's] sight...and I am pleasing in his eyes..."** Just as Queen Esther's request

seemed dependent upon her favor in the king's eyes, in our flesh, we can sometimes feel like we need to earn God's attention, even His love. Our prayers can almost be shut down before they start because of some sense that God is disappointed in us.

Don't conflate any disappointment you may have with yourself with God. He doesn't think like we do. It's the blood of Christ that ushers us into the throne room of grace, not our own merit. That's why it's the throne of GRACE. It's nothing we earned, just something we're given. Just trust what His Word says about you and Him, keep drawing close, and He will reward you with His presence.

Esther's problem was, she was going to someone who didn't have the power to save.

Esther 8:7-8

7 Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows, because he intended to lay hands on the Jews. 8 But you may write as you please with regard to the Jews, in the name of the king, and seal it with the king's ring, for an edict written in the name of the king and sealed with the king's ring cannot be revoked.

The king's response was essentially, *"What's done is done! My hands are tied!"* You'd think he could've just said, *"Now, you listen to ME! I'M THE KING! I will rescind any law I please!!!"* He couldn't, though. Persian and Median kings were regarded as infallible; therefore, their laws were irrevocable. You'd think they would've been more discriminating about the laws they enacted, but they weren't.

We see this in the events of the beloved Bible story, Daniel and the Lion's Den. A bunch of other overseers were envious of Daniel's status and favor with King Darius, Ahasuerus' father, so they convinced the king to enact this dumb law that made it illegal to pray to anyone but the king for 30 days, knowing Daniel would break it. Well, the king didn't think it through, and then he learned that Daniel had been trapped...

Daniel 6:14-15

14 Then the king, when he heard these words, was much distressed and set his mind to deliver Daniel. And he labored till the sun went down to rescue him. 15 Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed.

They called King Darius out! The king's edict was THAT FIXED by Persian and Median standards, so Ahasuerus was truly stuck. The solution???

"You may write as you please with regard to the Jews." The first edict couldn't be revoked, so the strategy now became to OFFSET it with a second. So it says...

Esther 8:9-12

9 The king's scribes were summoned at that time, in the third month, which is the month of Sivan, on the twenty-third day. And an edict was written, according to all that Mordecai commanded concerning the Jews, to the satraps and the governors and the officials of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, 127 provinces, to each province in its own script and to each people in its own language, and also to the Jews in their script and their language. 10 And he wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed it with the king's signet ring. Then he sent the letters by mounted couriers riding on swift horses that were used in the king's service, bred from the royal stud, 11 saying that the king allowed the Jews who were in every city to gather and defend their lives, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate any armed force of any people or province that might attack them, children and women included, and to plunder their goods, 12 on one day throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar.

Two months and ten days after Haman's edict, and eight and a half months before the date set for the Jews' annihilation, scribes penned Mordecai's edict.

The first edict, Haman's edict, had REMOVED GOVERNMENTAL PROTECTIONS from the Jews of the empire, and it had FUNDED MILITARY ACTION against them. If you remember, when Haman first made his proposal, he said...

Esther 3:9-11

9 If it please the king, let it be decreed that they be destroyed, and I will pay 10,000 talents of silver into the hands of those who have charge of the king's business, that they may put it into the king's treasuries. 10 So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews. 11 And the king said to Haman, The money is given to you, the people also, to do with them as it seems good to you.

The 10,000 talents of silver Haman offered wasn't a bribe for getting the king to carry out his wish. He was offering to FUND THE CAMPAIGN. However, the king said, "**The money is given you,**" which in the Hebrew is "*The silver is yours,*" as if to say, "*Keep your money.*" Thus, Haman's edict that the king authorized removed imperial protections from the Jews and approved the expenditure for the annihilation of the Jews.

The second edict, Mordecai's edict, permitted the Jews to FORM MILITIAS, and it REMOVED ROYAL PROTECTIONS, though not the funding, from their enemies. One commentator pointed out that the royal provisions were removed so that the Jews actions in defending themselves would not be seen as rebellion against the crown.

"If you're attacked, you can fight back! They're not with me!"

So, now the enemies of the Jews were in the same predicament as the Jews; they AND THEIR FAMILIES were now TARGETS that the Jews could destroy without fear of governmental

reprisals. And like Haman's crew, the Jews were also granted permission to plunder their enemies' goods; we'll see what they did with those spoils next time...

Esther 8:13

A copy of what was written was to be issued as a decree in every province, being publicly displayed to all peoples, and the Jews were to be ready on that day to take vengeance on their enemies.

Did you catch that? **"The Jews were to be READY."**

The same wording was used in Esther chapter 3 when Haman wrote the first edict. It said...

Esther 3:13-14

13 Letters were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with instruction to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all Jews, young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods. 14 A copy of the document was to be issued as a decree in every province by proclamation to all the peoples to be ready for that day.

So, the enemies of Israel had been on the move, preparing for two months now. Israel had to be ready! What did that look like? I imagine it meant procuring weapons, having some sort of weapons training, perhaps even practicing attack strategy. Remember, "gathering" to defend themselves was essentially forming militias.

What a day! What focus! I think of Pippin from Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* when he said...

"I don't want to be in a battle. But waiting on the edge of one I can't escape is even worse."

There was no avoiding the 13th of Adar! The Jews didn't have the luxury of complacency, thinking, *"Now with this new edict, our enemies probably won't even attack."* This was life or death! They couldn't take that chance.

We talked about this Sunday, but God's Word has revealed to us that we aren't preparing for a battle that's months away. No, we go out to battle EVERY DAY!!! Concerning our adversary, the scriptures say...

1 Peter 5:8

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Luke 4:13

And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

We face an enemy who is fierce and cunning. He's ruthless, and he knows when we most easily give in to temptation--when we're tired, lonely, hungry, or upset. Those are the times when our flesh is weak and our guard is down; it's for those times that we must be PREPARED! Just because we can't always sense the battle doesn't mean that it isn't raging all around us! The battle is CONSTANT! Paul taught the Galatians...

Galatians 5:17

For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

The battle is REAL, and it isn't coming in a few months. IT'S HERE! Like the Jews throughout Persia, we've been made aware of the battle, but have we taken it seriously and prepared? How adept are we with the weapons of our warfare? Paul told the Corinthians that our weapons are MIGHTY through God if we'll just take them up. Are we disciplined with them--in **STUDYING** and **MEDITATING** on the **WORD**, in **PRAYING**, in walking in **OBEDIENCE** to the Word and the Spirit--enough so that when the battle is felt and raging it won't consume us?

Imagine the training that the men young and old put themselves through to be ready for the 13th of Adar. Do you think they would've been okay with not being exactly sure how to hold and swing a blade? Think of this. Imagine it's the 12th of Adar, the night before battle. If your survival and the survival of your family tomorrow depended upon how well you knew and walked in obedience to the Word of God, how would you fare?

...

It's just our walk with the Lord and that of our families that's at stake! Pastor Kevin drove this home on Sunday. We read A LOT, but how much of what we READ, and WATCH, and LISTEN TO prepares us to fight our spiritual battles? There's victory to be had over sin and the world in Christ if we'll see the battle and BE READY.

Before the Jews could ready themselves, they had to actually HEAR this new edict...

Esther 8:14

So the couriers, mounted on their swift horses that were used in the king's service, rode out hurriedly, urged by the king's command. And the decree was issued in Susa the citadel.

Do you hear the urgency? The couriers mounted "**swift horses**" and "**rode out hurriedly, urged by the king's command.**" A decree that condemned the Jews to death had already gone out two months prior. If these couriers didn't reach their assignments in time, people would die! Jews would be massacred! These couriers carried a message from the king that, *if believed*, would save their lives. Think of the urgency of the riders!

"YES! THE KING MADE A DECREE AGAINST YOU. PREVIOUSLY YOU WERE CONDEMNED YOU TO DEATH!"

"HOWEVER, THE KING IS FOR YOU! HE SAYS YOU CAN DEFEND YOURSELVES! YOU DON'T HAVE TO DIE!!!"

Another REVERSAL.

Do **WE** live with such urgency? You see, we've been entrusted with two similar decrees for everyone in the world. The first one likewise condemns EVERYONE to DEATH...

Romans 3:23
for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Romans 6:23a
For the wages of sin is death...

That edict is in effect everywhere and with everyone in the world, and THE FATHER CANNOT NOT RESCIND IT. Like the Jews before Mordecai's writing of the second edict, everyone who has ever lived or ever will live STANDS CONDEMNED to death already. Praise God, though. There's a second edict...

2 Corinthians 5:20-21
20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

This is the only message that can save and change lives! The question is, will we allow ourselves to be "**urged by the [King of] king's command,**" and urgently take it to everyone in time? They've got to believe the message to call on the Lord for salvation, but before they can believe it, they've got to HEAR IT! Paul laid it out...

Romans 10:14-15
14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!

Did you know that 3 BILLION PEOPLE alive right now will die without ever having the chance to hear the gospel because there's no Bible in their language? Who will get it to them?

These mounted riders knew lives depended on them. They would make sure the Jews knew of their opportunity for deliverance and victory. How would the Jews of the empire react to this news?

Esther 8:15-17

15 Then Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal robes of blue and white, with a great golden crown and a robe of fine linen and purple, and the city of Susa shouted and rejoiced. 16 The Jews had light and gladness and joy and honor. 17 And in every province and in every city, wherever the king's command and his edict reached, there was gladness and joy among the Jews, a feast and a holiday. And many from the peoples of the country declared themselves Jews, for fear of the Jews had fallen on them.

The Bible doesn't specifically state this, but given the timing of all these events, these are likely the same robes Mordecai had worn as Haman was forced to parade him through the streets in honor. Now he was even wearing the king's signet. Who does Mordecai look like now? Haman! Mordecai had the king's honor, the king's signet, and he was over the house of Haman!

WHAT A REVERSAL!!!

I love verse 16. It says...

Esther 8:16

The Jews had light and gladness and joy and honor.

After Haman's edict had gone out, Susa was thrown into confusion and chaos while its writers sat down to have a drink in utter apathy. Now after the proclamation of Mordecai's edict, there was "**light and gladness and joy and honor,**" feasting, holidays, and celebrations.

Another REVERSAL.

The historian also records that "**many from the peoples of the country declared themselves Jews, for fear of the Jews had fallen on them.**" You see, the way the word that translates to "declared themselves Jews" in the Hebrew can sometimes have to do with a FEIGNING ACTION rather than a genuine one. The NET Bible translates it, "Many of the resident peoples *PRETENDED* to be Jews," indicating that the people weren't necessarily genuine in their "decision" to become a Jew, which makes sense given that the scriptures say that they did so out of fear.

The most powerful man in Persia apart from the king was destroyed as soon as he targeted God's people. The people of the empire saw which way the wind was now blowing, and it wasn't with Haman. No longer was it the enemies of the Jews who celebrated while the Jews watched over their shoulders in confusion and panic; now it was the Jews who rejoiced, and their enemies were on notice!

Apart from the execution of this edict, which we'll delve into next time, the reversal is complete! In fact, look at just how **COMPLETELY** God reversed Israel's circumstances...

Show Reversals in the Book of Esther pic. Leave it up as I talk through it.

Reversals in the Book of Esther

The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will. Proverbs 21:1

<p>Haman is honored. Esther 3:1</p>	One Sleepless Night	<p>Mordecai is honored. Esther 6:11</p>
<p>Haman is given the king's authority. Esther 3:10</p>		<p>Mordecai is given the king's authority. Esther 8:2</p>
<p>Haman writes an edict to annihilate all the Jews in the empire. Esther 3:12</p>		<p>Mordecai writes an edict permitting the Jews to defend themselves. Esther 8:9-11</p>
<p>Jews in Susa cast into fearful confusion and chaos. Esther 3:15</p>		<p>Jews in Susa and across the empire had light, gladness, joy, and honor. Esther 8:15-17</p>
<p>Haman boasts of his wealth and status. Esther 5:11-12</p>		<p>Mordecai put in charge of Haman's estate. Esther 8:2</p>
<p>Haman plots to hang Mordecai on the gallows. Esther 5:14</p>		<p>Haman is hung on the gallows that he built for Mordecai. Esther 7:10</p>

...and Haman, the would-be destroyer of the Jews was hung on the gallows he made for Mordecai, the man who God used to overturn Haman's edict, REVERSING THE IRREVERSIBLE, and saving his people. I can imagine the Jews praising God as David did, saying...

Psalm 30:11-12

11 You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, 12 that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever!

What are the greatest problems facing humanity today? SIN and DEATH...but guess what! Christ fixed those! He literally REVERSED the curse of sin, and if you've trusted Him as your Savior, you can know you have eternal life.

If God can fix *those* problems, are there any problems in your life that He can't fix? NOPE. In various circumstances the world will say "IMPOSSIBLE." God just says, "WATCH ME WORK."

God's Son was DEAD. Now He's alive forevermore! I was dead; now I know I have eternal life. I was worthless; He made me worthy. I was an enemy; now I'm an heir. I was a broken image-bearer; now I'm His masterpiece. I was a stranger; NOW I'M HIS SON! And that's your story too if you've called upon the Name of the Lord. Our God is a God who reverses the irreversible and you can trust Him completely.