

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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Rescuer

PART

5

TITLE

Greater Than Esther

SCRIPTURE

Esther 2:15-18; 4:1-14; 7:1-10; 8:1-6



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Well, it is great to see you, Providence family. If you're new with us, we're really glad that you're here. If you have a Bible, if you want to turn with me to the Book of Esther, it's in the Old Testament and over the next several moments we're going to walk through this story. It's an amazing story. It is a long story, and so instead of reading the story and trying to then explain it, there'll be no time to explain it. We're going to sort of walk through the book little verse by verse through lots of the chapters, and I hope it's going to be encouraging to you. Next week is Easter, and I've been reminded that there are... It happens every single year and every single holiday, and that is, there are times on the calendar when it's time to celebrate and people aren't ready to do it for a lot of different reasons.

Sometimes our emotional state, sometimes our marriage, our children, our finances, our personal health. We just received diagnosis for something and suddenly we find on our calendar, hey, it's Easter next week. We're like, hey, have a heart that's full. And sometimes we're just not ready for that, which is why it's really important for us as a church family to remind ourselves what the Bible teaches. And that is that there are moments to where even when it is time to harvest. In fact, you can find this in the Bible. It's a fascinating passage in the Psalms where he says, there is a time when it is time to harvest and there's a time to plant. And if you don't plant seeds when it's time to plant, there's not going to be a time to harvest. And yet what he says is, this is some years you get to the time when it's time to plant seeds and you're emotionally unfit to work.

You just can't do it. You can only get out of bed and sit on the edge of your bed. And what he's saying is this, is that for those individuals, when you go through that kind of deep pain, and if you don't plant. What happens is this three, four months later, when it's time for harvest, our circumstances change. And so sometimes what happens is we're no longer tearful, we're not crying because we have to work. We're crying when we have to work. And if you don't plant when it's time to plant, then there's no harvest even when the emotionally trying circumstances have changed. And next week is Easter. Literally in between services, the sweetest ladies of Providence comes up. She goes, I was just diagnosed with cancer.

She said, but Easter is Sunday. And so if that happens to be you. You're in a place, whether it's financial, emotional, relational, physical, I don't know what it is, and you're not ready to celebrate, let me urge you to wrestle your week and strain out a few moments every single day to spend some time preparing your heart to celebrate the greatest news and the only news that can rescue you from whatever it is that's paralyzing your joy. We want to help you with that. And so let me pray. Father in heaven, we bow before you and pray that even today as we look at Esther, this story, the world is so busted up in our world. And yet we read in Esther, although it's not refreshing because it's devastating, it's refreshing because their world was also really busted up too. And even Esther is clearly not the hero of the story.

And so would you remind us of hope today and then this week, Lord, as we look at the different ways that we're going to try to remind our heart of the significance of you dying for our sin and rising from the dead. Would you prepare our hearts to celebrate even if we're emotionally fragile? I pray all of this in Christ's name, amen. Well, today we're in a series we started a few weeks ago. We're going to finish next week. It's called Res-

cuer. Everyone loves a rescue story. There's something that's always been compelling and always will when somebody lays down their life for someone else to rescue them. And the Bible is going to be compelling forever because it's a rescue story. When we sin against God, the Bible tells us that God looked and he says, I'm promising that I'm going to send you a rescuer.

He promised a seed or son. One day there would be a son that would be born of a woman. And what we find is while we're waiting for this to take place, life is happening in all these centuries where humanity's living and God's intervening through his people. Passing this seed from one generation to the next, preparing for Jesus Christ to be born on the earth. And while God's people and other peoples are interacting and living on the earth, there's a lot of problems, a lot of challenges, and there's times when they need a rescuer. And so from time to time, God would raise up one of these normal people, an imperfect person just like you. If you have any illusion, when we turn to Esther and we're talking about a rescue and a hero that Esther is like this pillar of devotion and purity, and you're going to be reminded that Esther's not the hero.

Jesus is the hero. He's the only one who can be the hero. But you find these imperfect people that God raises up and they act encouraged and they do these remarkable things. And so we've been looking at some of these rescuers. All this culminates next week with Easter. And so let me remind you how you can help prepare your own heart for this experience. First of all, tonight at six o'clock, we're going to regather tonight to sing and to pray and to take the Lord's Supper. And specifically, we're going to come to celebrate and remember the courage that filled Jesus heart when he marched to Jerusalem, knowing what awaited him, and he did all that for us. On Friday, we're going to celebrate Good Friday. And how we're going to do it is there's lots of rooms at Providence and there's a self-guided tour that's been built.

It's kid friendly as well as adult friendly. A little self-guided tour where you kind of go from one room to the next and you see things and you can feel things and touch things and you can read things and pray over things. And the process, it'll take between 30 minutes to an hour. It's from 11:00 AM until 7:00 PM and you can come on your own time and just prepare your heart. And then next weekend, five Easter services. One on Saturday night, three on Sunday morning, one on Monday night. And if there's there, just tell you this hour and that the 09:30 hour next week, there's going to be a lot more people. It always happens that way. And so if it's possible, if it's okay with your calendar, if you're bringing someone and they can come to this hour, that's when you need to come, right?

But if it's possible for you to come either on Saturday night or Sunday at 8:00 AM, I know it's a big stretch, but it's possible. All right? There's a lot of people who do. It would be helpful to a lot of people here at Providence. But today we look at the one who is greater than Esther. Esther's a story of how God providentially uses this young Jewish orphan girl to rescue his people from genocide at the risk of her own life. The year was 483 BC and there's an empire ruling the world. It's the Persians, and they literally have control from mid-Africa all the way over to India, enormous swath of land. And the Bible tells us that as does all of history, that there was another empire that was rising and it was the Greek empire, and there was a king over the Persians.

His name was Darius. You've probably heard the name Darius in Daniel, in the lions' den. That was Darius. Well, Darius had spent nine years amassing an army in Turkey, preparing to invade Athens in Greece in the hope of avenging, a big, significant and embarrassing loss at a battle called Marathon. Nine years into his project of amassing this army, he dies and his throne goes to his son, Xerxes. Well, Xerxes was his Greek name. And like many people at this time, they had multiple names, all depending on the language. Well, the Hebrews didn't call him Xerxes. They called him Ahasuerus.

So if you look at Esther chapter one verse one, it says, now in the days of Ahasuerus, that's Xerxes. He reigned from India to Ethiopia. And this king who is the grandson of Cyrus, the great, son of Darius, Xerxes. Very powerful, incredibly powerful and very popular man in history and not in the sense that he was loved, just that a lot of people know his name. He wanted to avenge his father's loss. And so he began to amass an army himself. And then what happened was he called a 180-day war council in his capital of Susa. He brought all of his nobles and all of his war advisors in, and not only did they plan a war, but in verse four it says, it says that he showed the riches of his royal glory and the splendor and pomp of his greatness for many days, 180 days. Well, at the end of this summit, he now has an army waiting in Turkey that's 250,000 soldiers strong. And he has this strategy that he believes is going to bring him a great victory and great honor and wealth. And so he wants to throw a party and he does so for seven days. It says, the king gave for all the people present in Susa, the citadel, both great and small, a feast lasting for seven days. And if you keep reading all of the story, you find all of this elaborate beauty that was brought in. It was just this spectacular display of wealth and pleasure, and it was also a spectacular display of drinking, specifically drinking wine. It goes on and it says that the royal wine was lavished according to the bounty of the king. And drinking was according to this edict. There is no compulsion.

If you can get it down and keep it down, you can keep drinking, seven days. And after seven days, on the seventh day, the king says, you know what? I have all of this amazing, all these men and everybody's so happy we're all... Actually says he was merry with wine when he made this choice, which means that he was happy and hammered. He was drunk. And he says, you know what we really need in this moment is we need some feminine appeal. There's no women here. He goes, I know we're to get at least one. I have a queen, a wife, and her name was Vashti. And so he summoned Vashti to come and basically stand in front of all of these drunk men. We're told to Vashti why he wanted to do this. In verse 11, it says, in order to show the peoples and the princess her beauty for, she was lovely to look at.

One of the things you're going to find through this story is the setting is one that is dehumanizing. Were repulsed at the thought of being gawked at by a big group of men who were drunk. She refused, and Ahasuerus was just livid. He didn't know what to do. And so he called his advisors and says, what should be done? And they feared a empire wide women's liberation movement. You think I'm joking, I'm not. Look at verse 17, they say to him, look, the queen's behavior will be made known to all the women causing them to look on their husbands with contempt. In other words, if this story gets out to all the other places in the world, then all the women are going to hear that Vashti said no to you. And they will say no to their husbands as well.

So he says, what should we do?

They gave him advice and they say, let's do that. And what did they do? He deposed his own wife, Queen Vashti. He forbid her from ever seeing his face again and then he published plans to find a new queen. When you get to chapter two in verse one, it says that after these things, when the anger of the king abated. Many of us, we read that and we think, oh, that's like the next day. Like he's really angry. And he is like, all right, but now let's go find a wife. But if you read the story carefully, you find in chapter one verse three, in chapter two, verse 16, some dates of when things happen. And what it says here is this, is that his war council, although it was six months, was in the third year of his reign. And it says that Esther is not chosen until the seventh year. And so it took four years. What happened in those years? Well, the first two of those years, he left Susa with his army in order to invade Greece where he suffered another devastating loss. He comes back and he's upset, but then his anger is abated and his officials say, wait a minute. You know what? Let the king appoint officers and all the provinces of his kingdom to gather all the beautiful young virgins to the Harriman in Susa the citadel, and let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti. And this pleased the king, and he did so. And this is where we meet two main characters who are cousins, Mordecai and Esther. Mordecai and Esther, both Jewish people. Mordecai and Esther, if you go back in history just a little bit, a hundred years, some of their grandparents had actually been taken captive into Babylon.

They were pulled, they were ripped out of their homes in Jerusalem. They have to go a long way away. Suddenly that kingdom is conquered by the Persians. And Cyrus, the first king says, I'll tell you what, all the Jews, you can go back to Jerusalem. You can go back and you can rebuild the wall and you can rebuild the whole temple. And so there's books like Ezra where people are going back in order... Well, Mordecai and Esther's grandparents, they said, you know what? Let's just stay here. This is working okay, we don't need to go back. Well, they have kids and they have kids and their kids are Mordecai and Esther and their cousins. Well, Esther's parents both die and she becomes an orphan. And Mordecai, who's about 15 to 20 years, we think older than Esther, sort of becomes her father figure, taking care of her.

In very sincere and sacrificial ways, he takes care of his cousin. Well, Esther was not only an orphan, she was also beautiful. In verse seven of chapter two were told that the young woman had a beautiful figure and was lovely to look at. So she had something in common with Vashti. And not only did people recognize, the officials looking to fill the harem that was going to compete for the crown, also noticed her beauty. And so they take her and history tells us they took 400 women all around the empire to his palace. And what we're told happens next is something that I'm just going to tell you what it says, but I don't really know what it means is they gave him a year to beautify. Okay? It's like a whole bunch of baths and skin treatments, all kinds of stuff. That's what it says. They gave each one of them, which is why there's a four-year gap.

So two years for a war, and then all of a sudden they amass all these women in the palace and it's called the first harem, and all of a sudden they give them all the year. And then what? At the end of the year, every one of these women, they get an opportunity to be with the king. Sometimes we imagine that how it looked was

almost like a big beauty pageant. And they got all the women up on the stage and the king came down and he goes, Esther, she's the one. She's the most beautiful. That's not how it went down. And the Bible tells us exactly how it happened. It's a devastating and tragic and dehumanizing thing what happened. But this is what happened. Chapter two verse 14, in the evening, she would go in and in the morning she would return to the second harem in custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch, who is in charge of the concubines.

So this is what's happening. He symbols 400 young women who are virgins, who all have dreams of their own. He pulls them away from all of their dreams, some of them probably had dreams to be married, to fall in love, to have children, to have a family, and he pulls them all into his first harem. He gives them a year to get beautiful. And then another year, one at a time, they would go to the king individually at night and they would stay with the king until the morning and this included Esther. And then in one of the most dehumanizing things, even more so when she got out, she wouldn't go back to the first harem of the virgins. No, she went to the second harem of the concubines.

In other words, this queen, whoever she was, would also be living in a palace with at least 400 supermodel concubines. Which is why when you get to chapter four and chapter five, she actually says, listen, you can't go to the king unless you have an invitation. He's not invited me. I've not seen him in 30 days. This is her husband, his wife. He's got all kinds of other women to be with at night. This is the broken, barren, immoral, dehumanizing, arrogant wilderness of this story. Verse 17 says, when it was Esther's time, the king loved Esther more than all the other women, and she won grace in favor in his sight more than all the other virgins. So that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen.

I know it's totally broken and busted up, but so is our day. And there's a principle here about what the Lord is doing that I want to give you here, and this is that God has the power to elevate people into positions of influence. Some people have called Esther a Cinderella story, but if it is, it's really a broken Cinderella story because she got this king. It wasn't just that she went from rags to riches, she went from rags to riches with a filthy man and had no choice in the process. It's a devastating picture of what happens when arrogance fills a man's heart, man or a woman. When we become arrogant, we push people down. You think about the dehumanizing ways in which he treated people. History tells us that when he went into Greece, he had to cross water.

And so he got a bunch of his engineers to go with his army in order to build bridges, in order to fast track sort of his invasion into Greece. They build these bridges, and the history books actually tells us that just before they were about to invade, there was a big storm and wipes out all the bridges. And King, Ahasuerus was so angry that he murdered all the engineers involved. This is the same king who dehumanized his own wife, who dehumanized all of the people at his party. Listen, it is not a kind thing for humanity to get them drunk for a week. He dehumanized all of these young women that included Esther.

Well, Esther's queen. And when she is the queen, Mordecai, he's still is concerned about her. And so we find Mordecai constantly at the gate. He's always at the King's gate, and one day he's at the King's gate and he overhears two of the officials who actually guarded the king's quarters making a plot on the king's life. And so he, it says in verse 22 of chapter two, he told it to Queen Esther and Esther told the king in the name of Mordecai, and when the affair was investigated and found to be so, the men were both hanged on the gallows and it was recorded in the book of the Chronicles in the presence of the king. When we get to chapter three, if this happens to be a rescue story, we still need a villain. We still need a threat. There's no rescue if nobody's in danger, nobody's in peril.

In chapter three, we get a villain. His name is Haman. It says, after these things, King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, the Agagite. First of all, after these things, if you just look at the dates of what happens after this event, after these things was four or five years. And so now Esther has been in the palace as the Queen for four or five years when the king promotes a man named Haman who's an Agagite. Now, why is Agagite underlined? Why don't I do that? There's some significance to it. I know this is a lot of history and I keep bouncing back between like and 10 years ago and a hundred years ago, but here we go. A thousand years before this moment, Israel was enslaved in Egypt and there's an exodus and they come out of Egypt totally miraculously, and suddenly when they come out, there's a people group called the Amalekites who invade them.

They show no mercy at all. God protects them. They so they do survive it. And yet God says to them, there will be judgment because of this. 450 years later, the Amalekites, they're still just this deplorable people. They are hurting people everywhere, and God is the judge of the earth. His cup of wrath, right? When we sin, it fills up. That cup it just fills up. But eventually there's no more room left and so for the Amalekites, they just kept and there was no more room. And so wrath began to spill out. And 450 years later, there's a king, his name is King Saul. And he says, Saul, I want you to go to the Amalekites and I want you to exact justice upon them on my behalf, and I want you to kill everyone including the king. And Saul did some of it, but not all. He keeps the king and some of the other things, some of the other people, well, the king's name was Agag.

And so Haman was one of his descendants. Now they make the story a little bit more juicy. Mordecai were told is the was from the son of Kish. Kish was from the Benjamite, which was where we get the line of King Saul. So we have the Israelites and the Amalekites. We have one human historical representative, Saul and Agag. And now all these 550 years later, all these generations later, we have two descendants from this historical family hostility. One of them is Mordecai and one of them is Haman. And Haman gets promoted. We're told in chapter three verse two, all the kings servants who were at the king's gate bowed down and paid homage to Haman for the king had commanded concerning him, but Mordecai did not bow down. He's like not doing it, not bowing to him. And Haman was livid. Everyone else honored him, but he didn't.

And so he was livid with him. He was angry. And so he disdain to lay hands on Mordecai alone. In other words, he thought I could just kill him, but that wouldn't be enough. I want to kill everyone like him. And he

sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai throughout the whole kingdom. And so Haman comes through the kingdom the next day and he tells them that his empire is under a threat. And the threat is that there's the people group within the kingdom called the Jews. They have their own laws, they don't respect our laws, and they have tons of money. And if we just annihilate them and kill them, we can take all the money and increase the treasuries of the king and the king goes, that's a great idea. Of course, the king nor Haman knows that the queen is a Jewish woman.

And so the king pulls off his ring. It was a signet ring. A signet ring was one that had a little crest on it. And so when you punched a book or paper and it left it imprint, that was the king's signature, it was this authorization to do whatever it was on that piece of paper. One chapter three, verse 13, it says, letters were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with instructions to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all Jews, young and old women and children in one day. Now, if you're a careful reader of the Bible, you recognize that this is bigger than an ethnic tension. You see, ever since God promised a seed that would be born of a woman in particular in the Jewish line that would rescue all peoples in Jesus Christ, Satan has tried to exterminate the Jewish people to stop God's purposes in redemption.

Well, Mordecai is overwhelmed at what hears when he sees the letter that he and his people are going to be destroyed. And so he goes to Esther and he says, you have to go before the king and you have to plead on behalf of your people. And she says to him, if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called there is but one law to be put to death. Accept the one to whom the king holds out his golden scepter so that he may live. In other words, what's happening is this, if you win uninvited before the king, and if it was a bad day and he did not raise to you his scepter, that his guards raised their sword. And she says, this applies to me as well. This is when she says, I've not even seen him in 30 days. He's not invited me. If I go before him and he doesn't raise the scepter, I'm going to die.

And so Mordecai replies, do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape for if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise from the Jews from another place. I love his faith. He's like, God made a promise that he's going to send a seed. He's going to keep that seed. He's going to fulfill his promise. He says, but he uses people and this is when he says, and who knows Esther, whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as those. Who knows if it wasn't God's providence that elevated you into that spot for this moment in order to save these people. Esther calls for three days of fasting, and then she says, then I'll go to the king, though it's against the law, and if I perish, I perish.

And so let me encourage you to consider this truth about God and that is it has the power to inspire courage in his people. Every one of us has the capacity for courage. And there are certain days in life that just demands courage. And let me tell you something about life, you know this to be true. So this isn't a lesson. On those days when it's demanded of you to have courage and you don't have courage, you end up with regret. Courage is typically associated with an opportunity, and opportunities are like windows, they're open. When

the opportunity is open, you have courage. You can do something marvelous. You can do something servant hearted, you can help someone, you can pray for somebody, you can be with somebody. And yet if for whatever reason in that moment all you have is fear, you have no courage. And so you don't walk through that window, you don't engage. And suddenly what happens is the window closes. And even if you have courage a later day, you can't use it because now it doesn't matter.

Where do you find these buckets of courage when you need them? Or you find throughout the scriptures this, you find them. When the purposes of our own life and days are with the purposes of God and the world. In other words, if what you are about doesn't matter if you're an engineer or a pastor or a missionary or a doctor or a teacher or a mom or dad, doesn't matter what you're putting your hands to, so long as its noble activity for the glory of Christ, hoping to get the gospel to all people, seeking to communicate biblical truth, God's word to other people, seeking to be a person of love and generosity and compassion and justice for the vulnerable. What happens is this, you begin reminding yourself that what I'm doing is what God is doing, and therefore what I'm doing, even my death can't stop it.

And that's when the Holy Spirit pours courage into your heart in bucket loads. On the appointed day, Esther approached the throne. Chapter five verse two says, when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, she won favor in his sight and he held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. Like, praise God, she lives. The king says to her, all right, you don't just come in this place so clearly you want something, what is it that you want? Nobody would just come in here accidentally, the penalty of coming in here on a bad day, and you had to weigh out something as so significant to you that you would risk losing your life in order to ask me that. So what is it that you want up to half the kingdom? And she says, I want you to come to lunch today, a feast that I prepared you, Haman and me alone. Later that day, they're dining together.

And the king says, once again, what is it that you want up to your kingdom? And she says to them, let the king and Haman come to the feast that I will prepare for them and tomorrow I will do as the king said. And so something about the timing, it just wasn't right. We know what she wanted to do, and that was to expose the plan of Haman. And yet for whatever reason, she needed another day, she was like maybe 24 hours. Some of the circumstances will change to where this would be easier to be able to communicate. Something's not quite right. And so what happens next is amazing. Haman goes home and tells his wife about the most amazing day he's ever had in his life, except for the fact that when he was leaving the palace after this private dinner or lunch with the king and the queen, to had to see Mordecai who was there at the gate again. It was like a little pebble in his shoe. It just drives me crazy, the best day of my life. And I still had to see him.

Well, Haman's wife was a work of art. She was a real sweetheart. And Haman says, you know what? This is his wife saying to Haman, you know what we should do. Why don't we spend some time and some money and build some gallows in our backyard, 75 feet tall so that you can hang your enemy Mordecai in our backyard. And it will be so tall that everyone in our neighborhood and vicinity will be able to see. This is what happens

when you cross Haman. I mean, she clearly did not have a quiet time that morning with the Lord, not walking in the spirit in any way. And he's like, that's a great idea.

So he goes to bed and he hears him out the window. He is like, yeah, that's getting taller. It's getting up there. He sleeps great, but providentially, the king can't sleep. He's counting sheep. He's reading the phone book, that doesn't work. And he says, I'll tell you what, somebody get the chronicles of all the things that have ever happened in our empire. And somebody read it to me and they just so happened to turn to the page that talks about Mordecai saving the king from the two officials who plotted to kill him. And he pause in and says, wait a minute. Read some more down under that, what have we done to honor him? They're like, you've not done anything to honor him. He said, well, we got to fix that.

And so the next day they're at the palace and Haman comes, his gallows are all ready. He's ready to hang a man, and he comes to the king ready and the king interrupts and he goes, Hey, before I look, I can tell you have something on your mind. I have something on my mind as well. What should be done to a man whom I want to honor? And Hamans' like, well, of course you're going to want honor me, so let me just paint my prize. What is it that I really want? I'll tell you, this is what I would really want. This is what you should do. You should put whoever this guy is that you want to honor, you should put him on one of your horses. You should put one of your robes on him and you should parade him through town and have somebody stand in front and say, this is what happens when the king honors a man.

And he says, great idea. I want you to go do that with Mordecai. And Haman's like got to be kidding me. That's exactly what happened. He had the parade, Mordecai, his enemy through town saying, this is the man. This is what happens when the king honors a man. Haman goes home and he's crying, and his wife, who's clearly not still walking in the Holy Spirit curses him. Says, well, if that happened to you, you're probably going to die today anyway. Spiritual gift of encouragement is not hers. It's amazing what happens next.

There's a knock, amen. Amen's like, who is that? And it's the guards saying, hey, you got lunch plans. Remember? You've been invited with the king and queen. They bring them there and sure enough, they start eating again. And the king says the third time, all right Esther, what is it that you want? And she says, let my life be granted me for my wish and my people for my request. For we have been sold I and my people to be destroyed, to be killed, to be annihilated the king ask, who'd dare to do this? There are only three at the table. She's like him.

Now, some of you're imagining that maybe Esther is this pillar, this bastion of great devotion, but I want you to think about something about her life. She's so clearly not the hero of the story. God used an imperfect person to do really amazing things. And I realized, like I realized that she probably would've died has she resisted the king. But we're about to study a story in a couple weeks in Daniel, and there were some young people there who said, I am not going to violate my relationship with the Lord even if it means I die.

The Bible never once commends Esther's devotion to the Lord. To be a faithful Jewish person meant that you went to Passover, you celebrated Passover, you sacrificed on the day of atonement, you worshiped with other people, you kept dietary laws. In five years, people who were closest to her had no idea she was Jewish. So if Esther, you say, why are you badmouthing Esther? Maybe she's this amazing person, the Bible just doesn't tell us she is. She was willing. And what I love about that is that means that we can all learn something from her story, that we don't have to be perfect to be used by the Lord to do great things.

The king goes out of the garden, goes out of the room into the garden to collect his thoughts, and Haman knows that he has to plead for mercy. Esther is sitting on a couch. And so it's one of the weird, funny things happens is the king, at the very time the king comes back in to talk. Haman who's pleading for his life, falls over the couch where Esther is laying and he says, will you even assault the queen in my presence in my own house? And suddenly Haman is then sent and hung on his own gallows in his own backyard in front of his own family. The king exalts Mordecai to his place, he's prominent man and letters are then sent across the whole country, the whole empire I should say. And in that letter it says that not only do you not have to harm the Jews, but I'm authorizing the Jews to weaponize themselves to be able to protect their lives.

And God protected, rescued the Jewish people that day. And there was a celebration, it still practiced now. It's called the Feast of Purim. And it was established in chapter nine verse 27. The Jews firmly obligated themselves in their offspring and all who joined them that without fail they would keep these two days according to what was written and at the time appointed every year that these days should be remembered and kept through every generation. And so the third principle is this, is that God has the power to rescue his people. I want you to think about something, and this is, I hope it will be encouraging to you. Throughout this book of 10 chapters, the king, Ahasuerus, whether his name or his person is referenced 175 times and God is not referenced once.

Now why would that be? I believe that God in his grace and love for each one of us, he knew not only was it a test to be able to see how is God providentially at work in the world? Do we have eyes to see these kinds of things, to be able to see that it was God who actually elevated Esther, that it was God who caused a man not to be able to sleep, it was God who caused one of the servants to read the story about Mordecai on the very night that it was most important to do so. It was God who does all these things. But isn't it true that sometimes when we live our life today, and I'm not saying that we don't have instruction from the scriptures as the how to live our life. But isn't it true that every one of us faces all kinds of different scenarios where we would just love God to say, do this.

And then you read the Old Testament and New Testament and you find they're like, and God said to Moses, hey, go and do this right now. And you're like, man, how did that happen? I think God put Esther, a story that's all about God and he never mentions God to show us that he understands what it's like to long to know

the heart of God and to have his word and yet to keep leaning on him and trying to strain to see how is he navigating the waters through the stream and changing the course of the stream in human events. He's asking us to quiz in your life who's the ultimate mover? Esther says, God is. And in my life do I regard his sovereignty with faithfulness? This is a big question for those of you who say, I believe God is sovereign. What does that mean for your faithfulness? God is sovereign. He opens and closes his doors, but he never tells us that he's sovereign for us to lean on a shovel and pray for a hole.

He says, he's sovereign. You got a shovel in your hand, start digging. There's sovereignty and there's faithfulness. And so let me close, let me close this last Old Testament rescue with just a few applications. Then we're going to get to see five baptisms. It's going to be awesome. Two things I want to end with. First, let's regard Jesus as the one true king and Lord. Jesus against tomb we've sinned, left heaven and came to the earth and he lived without in order to save us from our sin. Imagine that moment in the story when the king says Haman must die. Imagine if Esther would've said, forgive him before he didn't know what he was doing and I'll die in his place.

See, someone else did that and it proves once again that Jesus is the true and better Esther. He is the one who did die on a cross for our sin. Esther simply called out a sin. It was that one, it's that evil Haman. It was Jesus who called out sin and then gave himself as a propitiation to die for our sin. And he did hang high on a cross where everyone could see. And on the third day, he rose from the dead. And the Bible says to everyone who confesses and believes in him that he forgives and justifies. That means he takes away our sin and he gives us his righteousness. And this begins a brand new life where we get to enter into the king's presence at any time we want and not fear our life.

Many of us I know have tremendous influence in the world. Many of you, you own companies, businesses, you work, you're influential, your artists, you have people in your sphere of influence. And I want you to know something that everything that you have in your life, whether it's influence, power, authority, people, or money was given to you, not that you would be a puddle, but that you would be a stream. That you would take what he has given you just like Esther and use it to serve people and help people and pray for people and rescue people. And that gets to the last, and let me just urge you to put your faith in Jesus.

Some of us, I know you feel no urgency whatsoever in following Jesus with your life because your life is going so well. Let me just remind you that Haman's life was going really well too. And then suddenly he was standing before God in judgment. And one day we too. And when we stand before him in judgment, our power, influence, and wealth will all be missing. The only thing that we will hold will either be our own personal sin or the righteousness of Christ that was given to us because we placed our faith in Jesus. I realize many of you're young and you can't imagine dying today, but the Bible tells me it's my job to remind you that you could. My question as we close is, are you ready? Are you ready for that day? And if you're not, and stop listening to everything anyone is saying and start talking to him because he says, whoever will call upon the

name of the Lord will be saved. Confess your sin, confess your belief, and confess his lordship of your life and you'll be forgiven and saved. So let's pray.

Father in heaven, we bow before your maker, and we thank you that you love us and we thank you that we see in this story just a picture of your providential authority, your sovereignty over the world. We also see people trying to be faithful with what they know. And so we ask God that you would fill us with that same sense of courage and understanding. I pray for those who don't have a relationship with you, that you would even use these baptisms that we're about to see, that you would help them to see the courage that it takes to stand up in a room like this and say that I am gladly associating myself with Jesus Christ and I have put my faith in him. I pray God that you would take their courage to not only inspire our hearts, encourage us, but in particular for those who don't have a story yet of grace and their life. You would use their story to motivate them to call out to you in faith now. We pray in Christ's name, amen.



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