

A Royal Pain . . . Part 1!

Our Text: **Esther 5:1-14** Now it happened on the third day that Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, across from the king's house, while the king sat on his royal throne in the royal house, facing the entrance of the house. So it was, when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, that she found favor in his sight, and the king held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. Then Esther went near and touched the top of the scepter.

And the king said to her, "What do you wish, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given to you—up to half the kingdom!"

So Esther answered, "If it pleases the king, let the king and Haman come today to the banquet that I have prepared for him."

Then the king said, "Bring Haman quickly, that he may do as Esther has said." So the king and Haman went to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

At the banquet of wine the king said to Esther, "What is your petition? It shall be granted you. What is your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!"

Then Esther answered and said, "My petition and request is this: If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, then let the king and Haman come to the banquet which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said."

So Haman went out that day joyful and with a glad heart; but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, and that he did not stand or tremble before him, he was filled with indignation against Mordecai. Nevertheless Haman restrained himself and went home, and he sent and called for his friends and his wife Zeresh. Then Haman told them of his great riches, the multitude of his children, everything in which the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the officials and servants of the king.

Moreover Haman said, "Besides, Queen Esther invited no one but me to come in with the king to the banquet that she prepared; and tomorrow I am again invited by her, along with the king. Yet all this avails me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate."

Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, "Let a gallows be made, fifty cubits high, and in the morning suggest to the king that Mordecai be hanged on it; then go merrily with the king to the banquet." And the thing pleased Haman; so he had the gallows made.

The news media always has a heyday reporting the questionable (and usually illegal) behavior of well-known people, including professional athletes, politicians, preachers, presidents of financial institutions, and even royalty. From "**Watergate**" to "**Iran Gate**" to "**Pearly Gate**" to "**Russia-gate**", the investigative reporters have been kept busy digging up news to satisfy the public's insatiable appetite for scandal.

But this certainly underscores the significance of the biblical warning:

Numbers 32:23 But if you do not do so, **then take note, you have sinned against the LORD; and be sure your sin will find you out.**

We may succeed for a time in covering up disgraceful activities, but eventually the truth surfaces, and everybody will know what's going on!

"The culprit discovers that the wrong we do to others, we do to ourselves."

Let's read the words of Psalm 7:14–16 and think of Haman:

Psalm 7:14–16 Behold, the wicked brings forth iniquity; Yes, he conceives trouble and brings forth falsehood. He made a pit and dug it out, And has fallen into the ditch which he made. His trouble shall return upon his own head, And his violent dealing shall come down on his own crown.

The French existentialist Albert Camus wrote: ***“There’s no need to hang about waiting for the last judgment—it takes place every day.”***

***Though the mills of God grind slowly,
Yet they grind exceeding small;
Though with patience He stands waiting,
With exactness grinds He all.***

~ Friedrich Von Logau

And Haman was getting ground down and he didn't even know it . . .

God's Sovereignty At Work!

Esther 5:1-5 Now it happened on the third day that Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, across from the king's house, while the king sat on his royal throne in the royal house, facing the entrance of the house. So it was, when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, that she found favor in his sight, and the king held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. Then Esther went near and touched the top of the scepter.

And the king said to her, “What do you wish, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given to you—up to half the kingdom!”

So Esther answered, “If it pleases the king, let the king and Haman come today to the banquet that I have prepared for him.”

Then the king said, “Bring Haman quickly, that he may do as Esther has said.” So the king and Haman went to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

- Esther was worried whether the king would acknowledge her and grant her an audience.
- If he didn't, it could mean her immediate execution, and she knew how unpredictable were his moods.
- The Jews had been fasting and praying for three days, asking God to intervene and save them from annihilation.
- And now Esther had to act.

One Commentator said, ***“What Esther did ranks among the great deeds of faith in Scripture and could have been recorded in Hebrews 11.”***

It wasn't enough for the Jews to pray and have faith that God would work . . .

SOMEBODY HAD TO DO SOMETHING!!!

James 2:14-26 What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give

them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

But we have to remember that Esther **WAS NOT** operating on the basis of “**blind faith**”:

- She knew that God had covenanted with the Jews to deal with their enemies (Gen. 12:1–3).
- She also knew that the God of Israel was a forgiving God who would hear His people when they humbled themselves and prayed.

***2 Chronicles 7:14* if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.**

- Furthermore, God had allowed a remnant of Jews to return to their land and rebuild the temple.
- Surely it wasn't God's will that they perish and their work stop.

But think about this . . . **Unlike Esther, when we come to the throne of our King of Grace, we don't have to wonder what our Father thinks about us, because He always loves His people and welcomes us into His presence!**

“One of the greatest needs in the church today is for intercessors who will pray faithfully for a lost world and for a church that desperately needs revival.”

Warren Wiersbe

***Isaiah 59:16* He saw that there was no man, And wondered that there was no intercessor; Therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him; And His own righteousness, it sustained Him.**

John Newton put it well,
***Thou art coming to a King, Large petitions with thee bring;
For His grace and power are such, None can ever ask too much.***

We must also notice that Esther **prepared herself to meet the king!**

If we knew we were going to meet the president of the United States at the White House, or royalty at Buckingham Palace, we would prepare for the meeting . . . And so did Esther.

Since God was at work, King Ahasuerus officially recognized his queen and invited her to share her petition . . . But this was all God's doing:

Proverbs 19:21 *There are many plans in a man's heart, Nevertheless the LORD'S counsel—that will stand.*

Proverbs 21:1 *The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.*

THE SOVEREIGN GOD IS ALWAYS IN CONTROL!!!

It's here that we might ask the question, *"Why didn't Esther immediately inform the king about Haman's evil plot?"*

Warren Wiersbe gives four reasons that we will briefly look at as we can learn from this the proper way to bring up heavy topics:

• **For one thing, it wasn't the right time.**

- The king was unprepared to receive the shocking news that his number one officer was a scoundrel.
- In the midst of kingdom business, Ahasuerus might have considered her accusation an act of treason if not just a piece of palace gossip.

• **It also wasn't the right place for her to intercede.**

- There were no doubt retainers serving the king in the throne room, and it would have been a breach of palace etiquette for the queen to make her plea publicly.
- The sight of a weeping, pleading woman before the throne might have annoyed the king and made matters worse.
- Better she should speak to the king in the privacy of her own apartment than in the throne room.

• **The third reason was that Esther wanted Haman, and only Haman, present when she told the king about his prime minister's evil plot.**

- With womanly intuition, Esther was confident that Haman, caught off guard, would in some way admit his guilt and do something foolish that would anger the king.
- It turned out that she was right on both counts.

• **But there was a fourth reason—one that Esther herself was unaware of at that time . . . One more event had to intervene before she could share her burden with the king, and it would take place that very night.**

- The king would discover that he had never rewarded Mordecai for saving his life five years before, and he would rectify that mistake immediately.

- He would honor Mordecai but, at the same time, humiliate Haman.
- And this experience would help prepare the king to hear Esther's petition.

Since Esther's banquet was already prepared, so Haman and the king had to hurry to attend.

Simply put, God so worked in the king's heart that he not only cooperated willingly with his queen but he also made Haman cooperate! **THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN GOD SOVEREIGNLY WORKS!!!!!!**

But Haman had someone else working against him other than God . . . **HIMSELF!!!**

Who Else Should Be Honored But Me?!

Esther 5:6-9A *At the banquet of wine the king said to Esther, "What is your petition? It shall be granted you. What is your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!"*

Then Esther answered and said, "My petition and request is this: If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, then let the king and Haman come to the banquet which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said."

So Haman went out that day joyful and with a glad heart;

- What an honor for Haman to attend a special banquet with the king and queen *alone* and in the queen's private apartment at that!
- It's unlikely that any official in the empire had ever been so honored.

As Haman ate and drank with King Ahasuerus and Queen Esther, his confidence grew. After all, he was indeed an important man in the kingdom, and his future was secure in his own mind.

But when the king asked Esther to state her petition, it made Haman's head swell even more . . . **For here were the king and queen discussing a personal matter in his presence!**

Haman was not only the king's confidant, but now here he was sharing in the intimate concerns of the queen as well. Since the queen had invited him to the banquet, she must certainly value his counsel too!

Now here at the banquet, we see three more evidences of the sovereignty of God:

- **First, the Lord restrained Esther from telling Ahasuerus the truth about Haman.**
- While there may have been fear in her heart, I don't think that's what held her back.
- The Lord was working in her life and directing what she said, even though she wasn't aware of it.
- God was delaying the great exposure until after the king had honored Mordecai.

• We also see the sovereign hand of God at work in the way the king accepted the delay and agreed to come to the second banquet.

• Monarchs like Ahasuerus aren't accustomed to being told to wait.

Proverbs 16:1 *The preparations of the heart belong to man, But the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.*

Proverbs 19:21 *There are many plans in a man's heart, Nevertheless the LORD'S counsel—that will stand.*

• Whatever plans Ahasuerus had made for the next evening were canceled to make time for the queen's second feast.

• A third evidence of God's sovereignty is that none of Esther's attendants who knew that she was a Jewess tried to convey this important information to Haman.

• Had Haman known the queen's nationality, he would have immediately devised some plan to prevent her from interfering.

• Palace intrigue is a dangerous game, and any of the attendants could have profited by telling Haman what they knew.

The fact that Esther invited Haman to the second banquet only increased this evil man's conceitedness:

Esther 5:12 *Moreover Haman said, "Besides, Queen Esther invited no one but me to come in with the king to the banquet that she prepared; and tomorrow I am again invited by her, along with the king.*

AND THIS IS EXACTLY THE RESPONSE ESTHER AND GOD WANTED!!!

• As long as her enemy was overconfident, she knew it would lead to a fall.

Proverbs 28:26 *He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, But whoever walks wisely will be delivered.*

Haman was confident that he was set for life . . . **BUT IN REALITY HE WAS JUST A FEW HOURS AWAY FROM HIS OWN DEATH!!!**

Two other men should immediately come to mind whose false confidence led to their death:

The first is King Belshazzar:

Daniel 5:1-30 *Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in the presence of the thousand. While he tasted the wine, Belshazzar gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple which had been in Jerusalem, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken from the temple of the house of God which had been in Jerusalem; and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone.*

In the same hour the fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his hips were loosened and his knees knocked against each other. The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. The king spoke, saying to the wise men of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing, and tells me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck; and he shall be the third ruler in the kingdom." Now all the king's wise men came, but they could not read the writing, or make known to the king its interpretation. Then King Belshazzar was greatly troubled, his countenance was changed, and his lords were astonished.

The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came to the banquet hall. The queen spoke, saying, "O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts trouble you, nor let your countenance change. There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the Spirit of the Holy God. And in the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him; and King Nebuchadnezzar your father—your father the king—made him chief of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers. Inasmuch as an excellent spirit, knowledge, understanding, interpreting dreams, solving riddles, and explaining enigmas were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar, now let Daniel be called, and he will give the interpretation."

Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king spoke, and said to Daniel, "Are you that Daniel who is one of the captives from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah? I have heard of you, that the Spirit of God is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you. Now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing and make known to me its interpretation, but they could not give the interpretation of the thing. And I have heard of you, that you can give interpretations and explain enigmas. Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around your neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom."

Then Daniel answered, and said before the king, "Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another; yet I will read the writing to the king, and make known to him the interpretation. O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father a kingdom and majesty, glory and honor. And because of the majesty that He gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whomever he wished, he executed; whomever he wished, he kept alive; whomever he wished, he set up; and whomever he wished, he put down. But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. Then he was driven from the sons of men, his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. They fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses.

"But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this. And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines, have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know; and the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified. Then the fingers of the hand were sent from Him, and this writing was written.

"And this is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of each word. MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; PERES: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." Then Belshazzar gave the

command, and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a chain of gold around his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain.

The second is Judas:

Matthew 27:1–10 When morning came, all the chief priests and elders of the people plotted against Jesus to put Him to death. And when they had bound Him, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate the governor.

Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” And they said, “What is that to us? You see to it!”

Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself.

But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, “It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood.”⁷ And they consulted together and bought with them the potter’s field, to bury strangers in. Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.

Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, “And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced, and gave them for the potter’s field, as the LORD directed me.”

The only safe place to put our confidence and hope is in the Lord!

Let’s pray . . .