

A Royal Pain . . . Part 2!

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.

There once was a twelve-year-old who resigned from delivering the San Francisco Examiner. In doing so, this twelve-year-old boy wrote the following letter:

*The San Francisco Newspaper Agency
Agent of the San Francisco Examiner,
Circulation Department*

Gentlemen:

I am a carrier for the San Francisco Examiner. As provided in Section 14a of the Youth Carrier Delivery contract, I am giving the newspaper agency a minimum of 30 days written notice prior to my resignation. Please note my resignation will go into effect Tuesday [date]. . . .

I am quitting as a form of protest against the series you printed in early June entitled Gay in America and the very unprofessional and biased manner in which you report on touchy subjects like "Gay Liberation" and Abortion issues. I could not in good conscience comply with all the terms of my contract as stated in paragraph three and solicit a paper that I personally disagree with.

Sincerely,
Signed

- *Would we have written that letter?*
- *Would we stand alone against an entire company that stands for what we stand against?*
- *Would we have the guts to do what that twelve-year-old paperboy did?*

This is what Mordecai was doing . . . But Haman was interested in writing his own headlines!

Last week we looked at two truths unfold in our historical narrative:

- 1) We saw God's sovereignty working in all situations.
- 2) We also saw Haman's pride and arrogance working in all situations.

Let's pick it up here as we continue to see self-love reflecting itself in the ugliest way imaginable . . .

All About Himself!

Esther 5:10-12 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."

The famous actor John Barrymore said, "***One of my chief regrets during my years in the theater is that I couldn't sit in the audience and watch me.***"

With that same kind of an attitude, Haman left the palace and returned home with a puffed-up heart.

- He had just had an intimate dinner with the king and queen.
- And, he was anticipating a second banquet the following evening.
- So his ego swelled in the most disgusting of scenes.

Note the number personal prideful pronouns here in this text again:

Esther 5:10-12 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."

We should be reminded of that rich farmer in Luke 12:16–21 whose favorite word was "***I***".

Luke 12:16–21 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: **“The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, “What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?” So he said, “I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.”’ But God said to him, “Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?”**

“So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

Didn't Haman know any Biblical truth's on pride? Here's a reminder of a few of them for us:

Proverbs 16:18 **Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.**

Proverbs 29:23 **A man's pride will bring him low, But the humble in spirit will retain honor.**

John 3:27 **John answered and said, “A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.**

1 Corinthians 4:7 **For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?**

Why so many warnings? **BECAUSE PRIDE IS THE ESSENCE OF SIN!!!**

It's the number one thing on God's **“hate-list”**:

Proverbs 6:16–19 **These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him:**

A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.

It was pride that turned Lucifer into Satan:

Isaiah 14:9-15 **“Hell from beneath is excited about you, To meet you at your coming; It stirs up the dead for you, All the chief ones of the earth; It has raised up from their thrones All the kings of the nations. They all shall speak and say to you: “Have you also become as weak as we? Have you become like us? Your pomp is brought down to Sheol, And the sound of your stringed instruments; The maggot is spread under you, And worms cover you.’ “How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’ Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit.**

Satan even used pride to tempt Eve:

Genesis 3:1-5 **Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden’?”**

And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, “You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’ ”

Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Bible scholar William Barclay said it well, ***“Pride is the ground in which all the other sins grow, and the parent from which all the other sins come.”***

But what does a sinful person have to be proud of really? We definitely can't be proud of our ancestry.

Puritan preacher William Jenkyn stated it like this, ***“Our father was Adam, our grandfather dust, and our great-grandfather nothing.”***

So much for our family tree . . . The only thing the Bible says is great about humanity is our propensity for sin:

Genesis 6:5 *Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

So much for our achievements!

In fact, someone once said, ***“Pride is the only known disease that makes everybody sick except the person who has it. But the irony is, unless it is cured, pride is a sickness that leads unto death.”***

But pride has a way of diminishing even happy occasions because it causes the heart to never be content. Just look at Haman in the conclusion of this chapter:

A Racist Hatred!

Esther 5:9b . . . *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.*

Esther 5:13-14 *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.

When Haman left the queen's palace, he was walking on cloud 9, but the simple sight of Mordecai immediately brought him down to earth again due to his racial hatred!

Mordecai's reaction here is very interesting because on previous occasions, he had simply refused to bow down to Haman:

Esther 3:4-5 *Now it happened, when they spoke to him daily and he would not listen to them, that they told it to Haman, to see whether Mordecai's words would stand; for Mordecai had told them that he was a Jew. When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay him homage, Haman was filled with wrath.*

But now, being emboldened, Mordecai even refused to stand up and acknowledge the presence of the illustrious prime minister . . .

When a presiding judge enters a courtroom, everyone rises and remains standing until the judge is seated. Whether we like the judge personally or not is not the issue . . . We are showing respect to the office that they hold. **But Mordecai makes it clear here that there is no respect to be given where it is not due!**

AND THIS MADE HAMAN FURIOUS!!!

Esther 5:9 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.***

Haman hated the Jews in general . . . **BUT NOW HE HATES MORDECAI IN PARTICULAR!!!**

His hatred poisoned his system to such an extreme that he couldn't even enjoy talking about his greatness!

Esther 5:13 Yet all this avails me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate."

(Just look at the way the majority of news media and elites spoke of President Trump.)

- Malice is that deep-seated hatred that brings delight if our enemy suffers and pain if our enemy succeeds.
- Malice can never forgive; it must always take revenge.
- Malice has a good memory for hurts and a bad memory for kindnesses.

1 Corinthians 5:8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Ephesians 4:30–32 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

Colossians 3:8 But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.

What makes malice so horrible is that it has to act . . . In other words, eventually it must express itself!

If a person wants to self-destruct, the fastest way to do it is to be like Haman and cultivate a malicious spirit!

We see clearly that Haman had infected his wife and friends with his sinful hatred of the Jews. So they suggested that he ask the king for permission to hang Mordecai. ***(Which just shows how much second-hand prejudice can sicken others around the diseased.)***

Now, a man with Haman's authority could always trump up some charge, and the king wasn't about to take time to investigate . . . But this is where the sovereignty of God comes into play again:

- Notice all of this was before Ahasuerus discovered that Mordecai had saved his life!
- So we can better understand Esther's delay in offering her petition to the king.
- Because after the events that we will read about in chapter 6 occur, **IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR HAM TO GET PERMISSION TO EXECUTE MORDECAI!!!**

Haman was so consumed with arrogant hatred, that he didn't even wait and ordered that the gallows be made immediately. (*For the record . . . We're not sure whether the gallows itself was seventy-five feet high or whether it was put in a prominent place that lifted it to that height, such as the city wall or the roof of a building.*) But in either case, Haman's plan was obvious: **He wanted to use Mordecai's execution to frighten the Jews and convince them that the king meant business when he approved the edict!**

After all, the public execution of a prominent Jew such as Mordecai would paralyze the wills of the Jewish people in the empire, and Haman would have them at his mercy!

There's one other thing about this gallows that we're not sure of:

- *Was it like the Western gallows, a device for hanging a person by the neck until dead?*
- *Or was it a stake on which a human body was impaled?*

(The Persians were known for their cruel punishments, one of which was impaling live prisoners on sharp posts and leaving them there to suffer an agonizing death.)

Whatever this gallows was, it was going to turn out to be used on the one who built it . . . **SIN WILL DO THIS TO US!!!**

Proverbs 5:21–23 For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, And He ponders all his paths. His own iniquities entrap the wicked man, And he is caught in the cords of his sin. He shall die for lack of instruction, And in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.

I want to end with a quote from Chuck Swindoll here:

“The longer we think about it, the more clearly we see four principles for dealing with difficult situations.

First: When preparing for an unprecedented event, wait on the Lord before getting involved. At least as important as the thing we are waiting for is the work God does in us while we wait. He works on our patience. He works on our circumstances.

He works on others. If we plunge in, if we run ahead, we foul up His better arrangements and plans.

If you're on the verge of a big decision, wait. In fact, I've found the bigger the decision, the longer the wait. Don't get in a hurry. Especially if it's unprecedented. If you have to cut a new path, if you're walking a road you've never walked before, and there's no map, better wait. Better wait for the Lord. How long? I have no idea. Could be three days, could be three weeks, could be three months. I've waited much longer than that, frankly. And I should add that during the waiting period, don't try to take things in your own hands. Restrain your tendency to "move things along."

Second: When dealing with an unpredictable person, count on the Lord to open doors and hearts. If I may personalize the proverb: When your ways please the Lord, He makes even your enemies to be at peace with you (Proverbs 16:7). Count on the Lord to do that.

Amazing things happen to our courage while we're waiting. Rather than getting more fearful, we become less fearful. Rather than losing heart, we gain confidence. The Lord becomes more important. His presence overshadows the threatening, even intimidating, circumstances that would otherwise immobilize us or paralyze our thoughts.

Third: When working through an unpleasant situation, trust the Lord for enduring patience. Think of the patience Esther must have had to refrain from telling the king about Haman, when she had him in the very palm of her hand. Haman, the man who hated her people so much that he was going to have them wiped from the face of the earth. Think of the patience she had to wait for just the right time.

In situations that are unpleasant, timing is as important as action, sometime more so. Pace yourself. Have patience. Wait for the situation to become bearable and workable.

Fourth: When standing against an unprincipled enemy, ask the Lord for invincible courage. I believe that's what happened to Esther in the midst of that first banquet. She sensed a growing invincibility and courage, even in the presence of her mortal enemy, as she waited for the Lord's timing. Ask the Lord for that kind of invincible courage. He will grant your request. He will give you the courage to stand.

I said earlier that nothing touches the heart like a song or a story. And the one to whom we sing more songs than to any other person is Jesus Christ. There are more songs composed about the person of Jesus Christ than about any other human being who ever lived. Why? Because His story is like none other.

- Did you know that they put Him on a pole, that they hung Him up to die?*
- Did you know that more people hated Him than loved Him?*
- Do you know that more cheered than wept?*

- *Do you know that when He died more applauded than sighed?*
- *Despised and hated by men and women, He died.*
- *Why do we sing to Him then?*
- *Because like no other person who has died, He arose from the grave.*
- *He is alive today, and He gives us a song.*
- *Do you know why He died?*
- *Not because some Haman hated Him and decided to put Him on a pole.*
- *He died because you and I are sinners.*
- *And the only way to satisfy the demand of a holy God in dealing with humanity was to pay the penalty for sin.*
- *And that required the price of blood from the unspotted Lamb of God, Jesus Himself.*

Remember . . . the “**Main Character**” in the Book of Esther, **God Himself**, was standing in the shadows keeping watch over His own.

May He continue to watch over His Own until we come together again next week!

Let's pray . . .