

**Title: The Unlikely Hero and the Unexpected Grace (ESTHER 7:1-10)**

In the grand tapestry of life, we often find ourselves caught between the threads of justice and mercy, revenge and forgiveness. The story of Esther, a young Jewish woman who became queen of Persia, weaves these themes together in a compelling narrative that resonates with our modern struggles and spiritual journeys.

Imagine a banquet hall, filled with the aroma of spiced wine and the soft glow of candlelight. At the head of the table sits King Xerxes, powerful and unpredictable. Beside him is Queen Esther, a woman of grace and courage, carrying a secret that could change the fate of her people. And there, among the guests, is Haman – a man consumed by pride and hatred, unknowingly on the brink of his own downfall.

This scene sets the stage for a pivotal moment in history, where the lives of many hang in the balance. Esther, guided by wisdom and faith, approaches the king with a request that will determine the future of the Jewish people. Her words are carefully chosen, her demeanor humble yet resolute: "If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me as my request and my people as my wish."

In this moment, we see the embodiment of Jesus' teaching in Matthew 10:16 – "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves." Esther's approach exemplifies this delicate balance of wisdom and purity, strength and grace. She navigates the dangerous waters of royal politics with the cunning of a serpent, yet maintains the integrity and gentleness of a dove.

As the story unfolds, we witness the dramatic reversal of fortunes. Haman, who had plotted the destruction of the Jews, finds himself ensnared in his own trap. The gallows he had prepared for Mordecai become the instrument of his own demise. This turn of events brings to mind the wisdom of Proverbs 26:27: "Whoever digs a pit will fall into it; if someone rolls a stone, it will roll back on them."

But here's where the narrative takes an unexpected turn – one that challenges our conventional understanding of justice and redemption. While it might be satisfying to see the villain get his comeuppance, the true heart of the gospel tells a different story. It's not about the bad man dying for the good man; it's about the good man dying for the bad.

This is the revolutionary message of Christianity: that Christ, the sinless one, willingly took the place of sinners. As the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 1:15, "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst." The cross, an instrument of death and shame, became the means of our salvation and eternal life.

In light of this profound truth, how should we view those who oppose us or seek our harm? It's tempting to cry out for vengeance, to wish for our enemies' downfall. But Romans 12:19 reminds us, "Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord."

This call to restraint and trust in God's justice is not easy. It requires us to examine our hearts and confront the places where we might be harboring bitterness or nursing grudges. Are we, in our own ways, setting a place at our table for the enemy? Are we feeding thoughts of resentment, pride, or unforgiveness?

The challenge before us is to live with the wisdom of a snake and the innocence of a dove in a world that often feels hostile to faith and virtue. It means being shrewd in our discernment, yet maintaining a heart of purity and compassion. It means trusting in God's sovereignty even when circumstances seem dire.

As we reflect on our own lives, we might ask ourselves: Where am I seeking revenge instead of leaving justice to God? In what areas am I struggling to trust in God's timing and purposes? How can I cultivate a heart of compassion for those who oppose me, remembering that Christ died for them too?

The story of Esther reminds us that God often works in unexpected ways, using unlikely heroes to accomplish His purposes. It challenges us to consider that perhaps we too have been placed in our current circumstances "for such a time as this" – to be agents of God's love and grace in a world desperately in need of both.

As we go about our daily lives, may we carry with us the wisdom of Esther, the humility of Mordecai, and above all, the sacrificial love of Christ. May we arise each day with the words of Isaiah 60:1 echoing in our hearts: "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you."

Let us be people who shine brightly in the darkness, who offer grace where others demand vengeance, who speak truth with love, and who trust in the ultimate justice and mercy of our King. For in doing so, we bear witness to the transformative power of the gospel – a story far greater and more beautiful than we could ever imagine.

In a world quick to judge and slow to forgive, may we be known for our compassion. In a culture that glorifies revenge, may we be ambassadors of reconciliation. And in the face of injustice and hatred, may we stand firm in the love that took our place on the cross, extending that same grace to others.

For it is in this – in living out the paradoxical, revolutionary love of Christ – that we truly arise and shine, reflecting the glory of the One who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

## Here's a 5 Day Devotional Based on This Weeks Teaching

### **Day 1:** God's Unmerited Favor

**Reading:** Ephesians 2:1-10

**Devotional:** In Esther's story, we see her appealing to the king for favor to save her life and the lives of her people. This mirrors our own need for God's favor and mercy. Ephesians reminds us that it is by grace we have been saved, through faith—and this is not from ourselves, it is the gift of God. Just as Esther found favor with King Xerxes, we too have found unmerited favor with the King of Kings. Reflect today on the incredible gift of God's grace in your life. How has His undeserved favor transformed you? How can you extend this same grace to others around you?

### **Day 2:** Wisdom and Innocence in a Hostile World

**Reading:** Matthew 10:16-20

**Devotional:** Jesus instructs His disciples to be "as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves" when facing persecution. This echoes the way Esther and Mordecai navigated their precarious situation. In a world that can often feel hostile to our faith, how can we embody both wisdom and innocence? Pray for discernment to recognize the "wolves" in your life—those influences or situations that threaten your spiritual well-being. Ask God for the wisdom to navigate these challenges while maintaining a pure heart and blameless conduct. Consider how you can be strategic in your faith without compromising your integrity.

**Day 3: Trusting God's Justice****Reading:** Romans 12:17-21

**Devotional:** When faced with injustice, our natural instinct may be to seek revenge. However, Paul reminds us to leave room for God's wrath, for vengeance belongs to the Lord. Esther didn't take justice into her own hands but appealed to the king's authority. How can you trust God's justice in situations where you've been wronged? Reflect on areas in your life where you might be harboring resentment or a desire for revenge. Surrender these feelings to God, trusting in His perfect justice and timing. Pray for the strength to overcome evil with good, as Paul encourages.

**Day 4: The Great Reversal - Grace Triumphs over Judgment****Reading:** 1 Timothy 1:12-17

**Devotional:** The story of Haman's downfall might satisfy our sense of justice, but the gospel presents an even more profound reversal—the righteous dying for the unrighteous. Paul, once a persecutor of Christians, became a powerful apostle through God's grace. This demonstrates that no one is beyond God's saving reach. Consider the areas in your life where you may have written someone off as "too far gone." How might God be calling you to extend grace and share the gospel with those you've deemed unworthy? Pray for a heart that sees others through God's eyes of compassion and potential redemption.

**Day 5: Finding God's Presence in Suffering****Reading:** Romans 8:31-39

**Devotional:** Throughout Esther's story, God's name is never mentioned, yet His providential hand is evident in every turn of events. Similarly, in our darkest moments, we may struggle to see or feel God's presence. Paul reminds us that nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus. Reflect on a time when you felt distant from God during a trial. How did He reveal His presence to you in hindsight? Take comfort in knowing that even when we can't see Him working, God is orchestrating events for our good and His glory. Pray for eyes of faith to recognize His presence in both joyful and challenging seasons of life.

**Practical Applications:**

1. This week, identify one area where you may be "entertaining the enemy" in your life. Develop a plan to address it through prayer and accountability.
2. Practice responding to a difficult person or situation with both wisdom and integrity. Reflect on how this approach differs from your natural reactions.
3. Write a gratitude list focusing on ways Jesus has "taken your place" and shown you grace.
4. Identify someone you've been harboring resentment towards. Pray for them daily this week, asking God to help you release your desire for vengeance.
5. Share the gospel with someone this week, emphasizing how Jesus (the good man) died for us (the bad).