

# Where O Death Is Your Victory? Where O Death Is Your Sting?

Esther 8:1-9:19 | Notes

## The Edict Countered (8:1-17)

### 1. A Total Reversal (A Common Theme of This Book) (Read 8:1-2)

- When **Rom. 8:37** says: “**we are more than conquerors through him who loved us**” we should ask: **What does it mean to be “more than a conqueror”?**
- To be “**more than a conqueror**” means **NOT** merely *defeating your enemies*, but rather *subjugating them & all their efforts to serve your benefit*.
- This is what God does with the wicked:** *He makes all their efforts to serve & exalt themselves ultimately be turned into blessings for his Church.*
- Israel's entrance into the Promised Land is a wonderful example of this:** Before God sent his people in to conquer Canaan he allowed the peoples of that land to *dig wells, build homes, and cultivate flocks & fields*. The people of Canaan *thought* they were building these things for *themselves*.
- But no, *it was God's purpose to use the very strength of his enemies to yield blessings upon his people!* This is what God did with Haman as well.**
- Not only did God cause Haman to *name the terms of his own humiliation & build the gallows of his own destruction* as we saw last week. (Ch. 5-6)
- God also caused Haman to labor hard to acquire positions & possessions ONLY so they could be showered upon his faithful servant, Mordecai.*
- All that Haman had *pursued, achieved, built, & stored up for himself* in his wicked pride was now bestowed upon the righteous who walked by faith.
- As **Prov. 13:22** teaches, “**the sinner's wealth is laid up for the righteous.**” And so shall it always be. **God turns the schemes and efforts of evil men & angels into the servants of blessing for his beloved children. That is what it means that we are “more than conquerors through him who loved us.”**
- But blessings though these things may be, earthly positions & possessions won't save the people of God. Esther and Mordecai still have work to do.

### 2. Esther's Plea For the Revocation of Haman's Edict & Rescue of Her People (Read 8:3-8)

- Esther yet again entered the king's presence **uninvited** (v4). And both her **WILLINGNESS to do so** & **the MANNER of her plea resemble the heart of Christ**.
- We see this in two specific ways: Like Christ our Savior, Esther took on the roles of (1) **Sacrificial Substitute**, as well as (2) **Intercessor**.

#### 1. **Sacrificial Substitute:** Esther put herself into the way of harm for her people's sake (again!) so that by her sacrificial act they could be delivered.

- Esther was willing to suffer herself instead of them; she was willing to die if that should necessary so that they could be rescued from death.
- In this way, Esther points us to the greater work of the Lord Jesus Christ who, as the true Sacrificial Substitute for sinners took all the sin & shame of his people upon himself, bearing it in their place, & offered up his life as the atoning sacrifice for their everlasting redemption.** (I Pet. 2:24)

#### 2. **Intercessor:** Esther also gives us a picture of Christ's heart of tender compassion, solidarity, & unfailing intercession for his beloved Church.

- The book of Hebrews tells us that, by his resurrection, the Lord Jesus has obtained a priesthood that is “**permanent**” and will never come to an end.
- We are told “**he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he ever lives to make intercession for them.**” (Heb. 7:25)
- This means that at every moment of failure, of weakness, of vulnerability & struggle, the Lord Jesus is standing before the throne of God pleading on your behalf, crying out that his blood is sufficient for you, & that by his perfect life every blessing of the sons of God now rightly belongs to you.**
- Jesus is pleading that by his righteous life and by his sacrificial death your everlasting redemption has been irrevocable purchased and applied so that nothing can ever separate you from his love or disqualify you from his grace ever again.** (What wondrous love is given to us in Christ, beloved!)
- We see a shadow of this glorious heavenly reality for every Christian believer in the earnest pleading of Esther before Ahasuerus here.
- Look at the way Esther approached the king with tender, self-sacrificing compassion for the rescue and deliverance of her people saying:

**“For how can I bear to see the calamity that is coming to my people?”**

- Esther saw her people's pain as her own pain; she saw their suffering as her suffering, and she used all the privileges, honors, authority, and power of her blessed position as queen to secure their rescue and deliverance.* Esther pled as one ready to do all she could to rescue those she loved.
- This, my dear brothers and sisters, is the heart of Christ for you!—the glorious, victorious, & risen Christ who is now seated at the right hand of the Father on the throne of heaven! He ever-stands in your defense, ready to employ all his wisdom, merit, authority, and power for your eternal good!**
- Transition:** Nevertheless, as God would have it, the edict of Haman “**could not be revoked.**” However, *through Esther's pleas* permission was granted for Esther & Mordecai to “**write as [they] please with regard to the Jews, in the name of the king,**” & to “**seal it**” with the king's full authority.

### 3. Mordecai's Counter-Edict Empowering God's People To Defend Themselves Against Their Foes (Read 8:9-17)

- It is important to note:** The first effort made by Esther and Mordecai was **NOT** the destruction of their enemies but simply the **ceasing of hostilities**.
- This was **NOT** about engaging in *sinful revenge* or *barbaric conquest*. Peace was sought, but by God's sovereign will, peace was **NOT** an option.
- Therefore, a decree was sent out allowing the Jews “**to defend their lives, to destroy... & to annihilate any armed force...that might attack them.**”
- When word of this decree began to spread, the spirits of the Jews were lifted with “**gladness & joy**”. They were **rallied & began rejoicing in hope** b/c of the merciful provision of their God. (8:15-16) **But the great joy of the Jews was matched by the great “fear” which “fell” upon their enemies.**
- When the peoples who had formerly joined with Haman in a hatred for the people of God heard that the day of their judgment was now coming and that if they continued in their wicked ways they would be destroyed, many of them turned from their ways and “declared themselves Jews”.* (8:17)
- This is a powerful biblical picture of the way that God uses both the ‘good news’ & the ‘bad news’ of the gospel to draw sinners to himself.** It was the fear of judgment that awoke the hearts of these rebels & caused them to see that they needed to find a way of escape from the wrath to come.
- This is why we must herald the full and true message of the gospel to the world.** Yes, let us tell people of the depths of God remarkable mercy! Let us tell the world that the God of heaven stands *ready to forgive, willing to pardon, and eager to cleanse all who call upon him!* **Amen!**
- But let us also tell the world that our God is a holy and righteous Judge *who will by no means clear the guilty or turn a blind eye to the wicked.*
- This message is also part of the wonderful gospel presentation** which we have been called to faithfully herald in the world, and it is **used by God for the salvation of the souls of men who right now feel a false sense of security in themselves and need to know the reality of God's holy justice.\***

### The Enemies Conquered (Read 9:1-19)

**The Major Point of 9:1-19 Is This: God Caused A Total Reversal of Events & Delivered His People From Their Enemies!** (A foreshadowing of Christ's Resurrection; 9:1)

- **"On the very day when the enemies of the Jews hoped to gain mastery over them, the reverse occurred: the Jews gained mastery over" their enemies.**
- The enemies of God's people **CANNOT** triumph. The enemies of God's people **CANNOT** win. **"The gates of hell shall not prevail against Christ's Church."**
- **Why? Because this world is NOT ruled by the pitiful power of petty tyrants, but by the sovereign and irresistible power of the Almighty God!**
- Our Lord keeps his people as *the apple of his eye, the delight of his heart, the object of his love, and the focus of his fierce & unfailing protection!*
- **God's people may have failed to keep covenant with him. But God shall never fail to graciously and mercifully keep covenant with his people!**
- **JUST AS GOD DID AT THE CROSS OF CHRIST**, he took what Satan designed for evil and turned it to bring about great good and the salvation of many souls!
- **JUST AS GOD DID AT THE TOMB OF CHRIST**, he took the misery of death & mocked it saying: **Where O death is your victory? Where O death is your sting?**
- **"On the very day when"** God's people were promised death, God gave them life! He stripped their enemies of power & empowered his people for victory!
- He took the scheme designed for their destruction and so turned it by his irresistible hand of providence as to become the day of their deliverance.
- **And by so doing, God gave his people a perennial testimony down through the ages of this precious truth: **THOUGH OUR SINS BE MANY AND OUR FAILINGS MOUNT UP TO THE HEAVENS, OUR GOD IS GRACIOUS AND KIND, ABUNDING IN STEADFAST LOVE AND WILL NEVER FORSAKE THE PEOPLE HE HAS CHOSEN BY HIS GRACE!****
- The powers of this world can roar and rage, kingdoms can rise and fall, but **ALL** must work for good to the people of God who dwell beneath his love.
- This **"day"** of deliverance is a foreshadowing & foretaste of the final deliverance promised to every believer whose soul is resting by faith in Christ.

Throughout 9:1-19 we see **several lessons** given to us through the details of this great day of deliverance. I want to draw your attention to **3**:

#### 1. The Fear of God Crippled the Hearts of Their Enemies—Both Small & Great Alike (9:2-3)

- The inspired text tells us that **"No one could stand against [the Jews]"**—not one person, whether peasant (v2) or noble (v3). **Why not?**
- Because the courage and strength of their enemies was "melted like wax" by the fear of God which was sovereignly put into their hearts. (Ps. 68:2)
- **Do not forget this truth: Even the breath that the atheist uses to denounce God's existence he must first borrow from the God he is denouncing.**
- Likewise, even the strength that the enemies of God's people need to do their evil deeds is borrowed strength—all power belongs to God alone!
- **They cannot move, breathe, or act unless God permits it.** And God is able to halt their course at his holy pleasure. (Think of all the biblical examples of this!)\*
- God's enemies can do no more and go no further than the Lord sovereignly allows for his own everlasting glory and our everlasting good! (Rom. 8:28)
- This is the protection which the Church of the Lord Jesus enjoys at every moment. Nothing can befall her but what God alone permits for her good!

#### 2. Haman & His Ten Sons Became the Opposite Message of What Wicked Haman Intended (9:5-14a, compare to 5:14)

- Do you remember how I told you that a gallows fifty cubits tall was both inconvenient and unnecessary unless your plan was more than death?
- Haman's plan was to **make Mordecai into a message** that told all Jews:

**IF YOU CONTINUE TO FOLLOW YOUR GOD THIS IS WHAT WILL BECOME OF YOU AS WELL!**

- Haman intended to use persecution to scare God's people into fear, faithlessness, and the abandonment of their devotion to God.
- **But in God's great sovereign reversal the very opposite happened.** Both Haman and his sons were put to death on a gallows (rather than Mordecai) and their defeat became a powerful public message, not to the Jews, but to all unbelievers across the empire that said:

**IF YOU CONTINUE TO REJECT THE ONE TRUE GOD THIS IS WHAT WILL BECOME OF YOU AS WELL!**

- The gallows built to silence the Word of God and stifle the Church became the very stage and microphone by which God sent out a powerful warning & call to repentance throughout the world. From Ethiopia to India, the nations saw and heard that the God of Israel is the one true God!

#### 3. God Used the Weak To Protect the Strong (There Is No Place For Pride In the Christian Life!)

- **There is a remarkable detail in this story that is easy to miss.** Remember that many of the *"faithful"* believers had returned to Judah/Jerusalem.
- Many years prior (approx. 538 B.C.) Cyrus issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to their land and rebuild both the city and the Temple. (Ezra & Nehemiah)
- We talked about the fact that those who chose to stay in Persia were very likely people who were weak in faith, clinging to their worldly comforts.
- This is **NOT** to say that these people were *"unbelievers"*, but it is to say that in their **weak faith** they certainly weren't showing good signs of devotion.
- Imagine how easy it would have been for those who returned to Judah/Jerusalem to rebuild the promised land to **look down on** and **think less of** those who stayed back, and **to see themselves as superior to them because of their stronger faith and more evident acts of devotion to God.** (Pride!)
- **But an ironic turn of events happened didn't it? Think: What would have happened if ALL the Jews had returned and none stayed back?** (See 1 Cor. 12:22ff)
- Mordecai & Esther, weak in faith as they were at first, would **NOT** have been present in Susa, & Esther would **NOT** have been taken into the harem, & they would **NOT** have become Queen/Prime Minister, & would **NOT** have been positioned to save the Jews—**INCLUDING THOSE WHO RETURNED TO JERUSALEM!!!**
- **By this we must learn a lesson:** If we find ourselves strong in faith and devotion, we must **NEVER** think that this has arisen from ourselves! No! It is a gift of God's grace. It is **NOT** a result of our own goodness or effort but of God's undeserved mercy. Apart from grace, we would have no faith at all.
- **Moreover, we must NEVER look down on other true believers who are weak in faith.** We should encourage them, but never look down in pride.
- **God has given the weak believer an equal share with all his children. They are not less than. What is more, God has given the weak *"indispensable"* roles to play in the life of his Church—roles we might overlook & yet as this book shows, they are roles w/o which the Church would greatly suffer.**
- **THERE IS NO PLACE FOR PRIDE IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. ALL GLORY BELONGS TO GOD ALONE! AND EVERY BELIEVER HAS AN IMPORTANT PLACE IN GOD'S WORK IN THIS WORLD.**

#### Application:

The powers of this world can roar and rage, kingdoms can rise and fall, but all must work for good to the people of God who dwell beneath his love.

