

The Story of Esther

by David Guzik

David Guzik's sermon on Esther highlights God's sovereignty and the importance of courage in the face of adversity.

Duration: 50:31

Scripture: Esther 9:1, Psalm 121:2, Ezekiel 18:4, Matthew 6:33, John 15:14, Romans 8:34, Hebrews 7:25

Topics: "Faith And Courage", "Gods Sovereignty"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by asking the congregation what God has been arranging in their lives and what they are being set up for. He emphasizes the importance of being in church and the significance of attending despite the time change. The sermon then focuses on the story of Esther and how she had to approach the king to save her people. The speaker highlights the pivotal moment when Esther is faced with the decision to risk her life and approach the king, and how Mordecai encourages her to fulfill her destiny.

Transcript

We're very grateful for these ministries that the Lord has given us and I'm very grateful to Pastor Pat and Miles who arranged the invitation for me to come and share with you this morning. And so if you're not too bleary eyed from the losing an hour of sleep last night from the time change, I hope we can spend some profitable time in the Word of God together. So I'd like you to open up in your Bibles to the book of Esther, chapter 9. We'll take a look at the first couple of verses of Esther, chapter 9, but let me tell you why it is that I want to talk to you about the book of Esther this morning.

A few weeks ago I got a call from a German friend of mine, his name is Jakob, Jacob, and Jakob called me and he wanted to know if I could help him out because Jakob is a man who ministers to Russian Christians from a Jewish background who live in Germany, if you could follow that well enough. And he gets invited oftentimes to minister at Messianic congregations in Germany that are made up largely of Russian immigrants who were Jewish people in Russia but have converted once they come to Germany. Well in any regard, Jakob asked me if I could help him out because he inadvertently had scheduled himself to speak in two places on the same evening and that just can't happen.

And so he asked me if I could come and speak at a Messianic congregation in Koblenz. And I told him, well yeah, my schedule was open, I'd be happy to do it. And then he said, you know, it's Purim that day or that week, would you speak to the people about Purim? And Purim has to do with the story of Esther, of

course.

And after all, I mean, I write Bible commentary and I'm a Bible college teacher, I know all about the story of Esther, or at least I thought I did. I opened it up and I said, well, if I'm going to teach about Esther, I should read the story a couple of times ahead of time. And I and I was so thrilled all over again about this beautiful story of how God worked in the days of Esther that I'm just plain old excited about this story in the book of Esther.

And I always think it's good whenever you're invited to speak somewhere, it's good to speak about something that you're excited about. And so I want to share with you from the book of Esther, we'll just take a look here at chapter nine, verses one and two, and then I'll tell you the story about how it all led up to that point. Here we go.

Esther, chapter nine, verses one and two. Now in the 12th month, that is the month of Adar on the 13th day, the time came for the king's command and his decree to be executed on the day that the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them. The opposite occurred in that the Jews themselves overpowered those who hated them.

The Jews gathered together in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to lay hands on those who sought their harm, and no one could withstand them because fear of them fell upon all people. Let's pray together, Lord. We know you're a faithful God, you're so faithful and true to us, and we ask this morning that as we give attention to your word, that you'll speak to us.

You've been so faithful to do this from this pulpit through Pastor Pat and others before. Lord, we trust that you have something to speak to us here right now this morning in Jesus name. Amen.

The story of Esther takes place at the very end of the historical account of the Old Testament. It's one of the last books in the historical chain that makes up the Old Testament books. And it was not a bright time in the history of Israel.

As a matter of fact, it was a very dark time. It was a dark time because the two nations that had come forth from the 12 tribes, the northern kingdom, which was known as the kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom, which was known as the kingdom of Judah. By the time of the story of Esther, both of those kingdoms were gone.

They had been wiped off the map. The northern kingdom of Israel was wiped off the map by the Assyrian Empire, who came and scattered the citizens of the kingdom of Israel into exile into different cities all around the Middle East. It was a forced repopulation.

Then about 150 years later, the same thing happened in the southern kingdom of Judah, except this time it was the Babylonian Empire that came and they took almost everybody who was in the southern kingdom of Judah and they forced them to remove themselves and be citizens of exile in different cities all around the Middle East. Eventually, as the Assyrian Empire had passed and the Babylonian Empire had raised up one day, the Babylonian Empire passed and the Persian Empire replaced it. And the Persian Empire was bigger than any of the previous ones.

It was bigger than Egypt, bigger than Assyria, bigger than the Babylonians. It encompassed almost all of what today we know as the Middle East, therefore, of all the Jewish communities scattered all over the Middle East, almost all of them were within the territory of that ancient Persian Empire. They didn't have

their own kingdom to call their own, but they were scattered throughout these cities in the midst of that kind of dark day for the people of God.

God raised up a shining light. You might say that God raised up a morning star to shine in the darkness. And this morning star was this woman named Esther.

Well, when the book of Esther begins, it's not immediately about Esther. It's about a king named King Ahasuerus in history. He's known as King Xerxes, but the Bible calls him King Ahasuerus.

And Ahasuerus was reigning over this vast empire of the Persians. And one day he decided to have a series of feasts. He scheduled three special feasts just to, I don't know, celebrate himself or celebrate something in the empire.

And during one of these feasts, when it was just him and all of the guys, him and his cronies, I suppose, they all got drunk and they demanded to see the queen of Persia, Queen Vashti, and demanded that she come in. And there was something immodest or immoral about their request. Therefore, Vashti said, I won't do it.

I'm the queen of Persia. I'm not going to go into a room full of drunken men and present myself in some way that is somehow immoral or immodest. I refuse to do it.

Well, when King Ahasuerus heard that his queen refused to obey this command, he was furious. And the book of Esther even tells us that they were concerned that news of this would go all around the empire and nowhere in the Persian empire after that would women obey their husbands if they heard that Queen Vashti got away with disobeying her king, her husband, the king of Persia. And so they decided that Queen Vashti would be taken away from her position as queen over Persia.

She would be dethroned or deposed from her position. Well, at some time after that, they decided to have a replacement queen. But how do you find one? I mean, obviously, if you're the king of Persia, you don't have a hard time meeting girls.

But they decided that they would have a special contest to find the next queen of Persia. You could have called it Persian Idol or something like that, where they would have a big talent show, so to speak, where they would collect all these people and get the most beautiful women of the Persian empire together, put them together in a big competition. And whoever won would be the next queen of Persia, except there's a big difference between our modern sort of talent contest and this ancient one in the days of the Persian empire.

The one in the days of the Persian empire was not voluntary. They basically shanghai'd the 400 most beautiful women in the Persian empire. And they said, whether you like it or not, you're in the contest.

And one of the women that they selected was a Jewish woman named Esther. Now, Esther was born in the Persian empire, but her parents were both Jewish, and so she was part of this Jewish community living in exile, scattered throughout all these various cities of the Persian empire. And unfortunately for Esther, her parents died when she was young.

And so she was raised by her cousin named Mordecai. Mordecai, somehow or another, got a job in the government service of the kingdom of Persia, and so he had a good job and could support things and things were going along well until one day, you wonder how they wondered how this would turn out. It

must have been a problem for them to discover that Esther had been forcibly made a part of this contest to become the next queen of Persia.

Well, what was it like to be part of this contest? Well, the book of Esther tells us that you would enter into the harem of the Persian king. And you know what they had to do? Basically, they had to endure a year's worth of beauty preparations before they were even allowed to have their interview with the king. Do you understand what this was? Basically, it was a year's worth of daily spa treatments that the women went.

Now, I've never been to one of these places, but my wife has. She got a gift sometime or someplace to go to one of these spas and she really enjoyed it. I don't really know what happens at these places.

I cover you with mud or something like that. They give you massages, they wrap you with seaweed, they put vegetables on your face. I don't understand that.

I really don't get the thing where they put the rocks on your back. I don't understand this, but the women apparently like it. And, you know, it was a wonderful time for Esther and the other 400 women who were part of the preparation for their special interview with the king.

But if it was good for them, it was especially good for Esther because God gave her favor as part of this group of 400 women. Now, for some reason, it was never revealed that Esther was Jewish. I guess if they had an application that you had to fill out when you came to the group, they didn't have a little box to check.

You know, are you Jewish or something like that? Nobody asked and she never told. So it was never really known that Esther was Jewish, but she was part of this group and she was a very beautiful woman. As a matter of fact, in chapter two, it tells us specifically about Esther that she was beautiful in her form and in her appearance.

To translate that into our modern way of speaking, it would say that she had a beautiful figure and she had a beautiful face. She was just an absolutely stunningly beautiful woman. And you can imagine what she would be like after a year of constant beauty preparations.

Esther had it better than any of the other ones because God gave her favor with the man who ran the harem and he gave her extra beauty preparations. I guess when they were handing out the mud, she got more when they were handing out the vegetables for the face. She got a few.

I don't know how they did, but she got more. But God gave her so much favor with that man that he gave her seven special assistants whose job was just to wait on her hand and foot, probably literally probably one for each hand and one for each foot. It would just take care of every manicure, pedicure and hair and everything all for the year.

It was really a blessed year for Esther. Now, if it sounds like the job of a lifetime to be a part of this group, you know, who was destined for the contest, you should remember the destiny of these women. If you were picked, if you were the winner among the four hundred, wow, that was great.

You won. You're the next queen of Persia. Congratulations to you.

If you lost, you were still obligated to the king of Persia. You could never marry anybody else. You could never be with anybody else.

You were in that harem for life and you would probably never see the king again. Maybe once or twice the rest of your life. And so basically you had to live as a widow for the rest of your life in the king's harem.

So sure, you had a great year of daily spa treatments, but the destiny of your life didn't look all that great. What you can imagine, all these things weighed very heavily upon Esther. There was probably a lot of stress, that whole competitive thing between the women.

But here was the day when she was going to stand before the king and have her interview. And the Bible tells us in Esther, chapter two, verse 17, that when she had her appointment with the king, it says, and I'm quoting now that the king loved Esther more than all the other women. And she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins.

The idea there is wonderful. In the ancient Hebrew, the idea there is that the king was impressed by more than just Esther's beauty. Now, I'm sure she was beautiful.

I'm sure we would say that she was a knockout, that she was absolutely gorgeous. But the king was impressed by more than that. He saw more than her physical beauty.

He also saw her goodness and her character. And because of all those things, he said, Esther, you are my queen. She won the contest.

And so there she was, a success, one chosen among 400 other women to be the next queen of Persia. Now, at some time after this, Esther's cousin, Mordecai, uncovered a plot to assassinate the king. And so what did Mordecai do? Well, being a loyal subject in the kingdom of Persia, he notified Esther.

He said, Esther, there's a plot to kill the king. Esther told her husband, her husband notified the guards or the police or whatever they called him back then. And he went out and got out the people who were launching the plot.

They stopped it and they made a notation of what happened in the records of the kings of Persia. Well, at the same time, another thing was happening in the kingdom. A man named Haman was rising to prominence.

Haman was a man who was very ambitious, a very hard worker, and he rose to such prominence that he became the second most powerful man in the kingdom behind King Ahasuerus himself. And everybody bowed down to Haman to show their respect to him when he walked down the street. Even if it was a crowded marketplace, everybody, when Haman came by, would bow down and show their reverence to King, excuse me, not to King Haman, he was virtually a king, but to this man who was second in all the kingdom.

And this made Haman a very proud man, a very arrogant man. But it also meant that there was one man who didn't respect him in the kingdom and his name was Mordecai, the cousin of Esther. See, everybody else would bow down to Haman, but not Mordecai.

At first, Haman didn't even notice. At first, Haman, you know, would see a thousand people bowing down to him. And for some reason he didn't see the one man who didn't.

But his assistant saw it and his assistants came to Haman and they said, Hey, did you notice this one guy who doesn't bow down to you? Well, after that, you know, just like I do, that there was only one man that

Haman ever saw in the crowd. It wouldn't matter if there were 10,000 people bowing down to him. He saw the one man who didn't.

And it made Haman crazy with anger. Haman said, I hate this man, I want to destroy him. And it's not enough just to destroy him.

I want to destroy all of his people. And so I want to launch a plot to kill the Jewish people in the kingdom of Persia. Well, as I said before, at that time, virtually all of the Jews in the world lived under the domain of the kingdom of Persia.

Not all of them, but just about all of them. If you were to kill all of the Jews in the empire of Persia, you'd be killing virtually all the Jews on the face of the earth at that time. But Haman was so crazy with anger that he launched a brilliant plan.

He said, listen, what we'll do is we'll get private citizens to kill the Jewish people. How do you get them to do that? He says, well, I know that it won't work because, you know, if you have a Jewish neighbor and they say, go and kill your Jewish neighbor, why would you want to do that? You've been friends with the man for years. Your children have played together.

Why would you want to go kill that Jewish family that lives next door? Haman was very clever. He said, I know what I'll do. I will make it in the law to where if you kill your Jewish neighbor, you get all of his property.

And instantly that introduced a great motivation for everybody to actually carry out these vicious attacks on the Jewish people. Haman was very clever. And so he said, great, I've got a plan.

I know what I want to do. It's going to be the greatest day of victory for me ever. Not only will I get Mordecai, I'll get all of his people.

But when should we launch this attack? When should we do it? So you know what he did? He cast lots. He rolled the dice. He essentially went to a fortune teller and they decided that they would do this attack in the 12th month.

Now, at the time all this took place, it was the first month. And so they said, we're not going to do it next month. We're not going to do it in two months.

We're not going to do it in six months because of the lots that were cast, the fortune that was told, so to speak. We're going to do this in 11 months time in the 12th month. Great.

Then Haman went to the king and he basically tricked the king into passing the law. I don't know if the king sort of lacked some smarts or maybe Haman was just very clever, but he was able to trick the king into passing this law. And it seemed like everything was perfect.

Everything was going according to plan. And especially because in the laws of the ancient Persians, once the king passed the law, it couldn't be changed. That's it.

You couldn't change the law. So when Haman was successful in getting the king to pass the law, he thought everything's great. Everything's going according to plan.

Well, when the Jewish people in the kingdom of Persia heard the story, they were absolutely filled with sorrow. They mourned and they prayed and they're fasted. And Mordecai challenged Esther, Esther, you've got to do something with this.

Talk to your husband, the king, and get something done about this. Get this law changed or get something done. You need to help us.

Otherwise, all the Jews in the empire of Persia will be dead. And do you know what Esther told Mordecai, her cousin? He said she said, Mordecai, you don't understand how things work around here. I can't go into the king's presence unannounced, even though I'm his wife, I can't go and see him unless he invites me.

If I go in without an invitation, without an appointment, he can have me killed. And we know that this king doesn't remind replacing his queens. So I don't know if I want to do it.

And Mordecai spoke to Esther and gave her some of the most remarkable words in the book of Esther. I'm going to read to you from Esther, chapter four, verses 13 and 14. And Mordecai told them to answer Esther, do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews.

For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place. But you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this.

Esther, I believe this is your moment of destiny, and I know it's dangerous for you to go into the king unannounced, but God has raised you up for this particular time and place. And it was a great challenge for Esther. But she said to Mordecai, OK, if you get the Jewish people to pray for me and to fast for me, I'll go in.

And after three days of prayer and fasting behind her, Esther said, I'm going to go in unannounced and see the king. You can imagine how nervous she was, right? She put on that dress, you know, the dress that she wore when she won the contest, I imagine. And she made herself all up and put on all the right perfumes.

And she stood there with those doors in front of her. She's going to walk through those doors and walk into the king's court unannounced, uninvited and just walk in and see him. And so she opens the doors and she walks in and there's the king right in front of her on the throne.

And she looks at the king's face and he's puzzled. Esther, what are you doing? Why are you here without an invitation? And I don't know if he could see her face and see maybe it was fear. Maybe she's trying to look confident.

She's probably trying to give a lovely smile. Hi, King. I just wanted to see you.

It's been so long. Esther told Mordecai that it had been a whole month since she had last seen the king. It's not like they spoke, you know, on the pillow talk every night.

It just didn't happen that way. By the way, it had been a whole month since she had seen the king and she won the contest. You can imagine what it was like for the poor women who lost.

And so anyway, she came in so full of wondering how this was going to turn out. And the king looks at her and he's surprised and he's wondering what's going to happen and what's going to happen. Is he going to hold out his hand towards what you've seen it like? And maybe those old Roman gladiator movies where Caesar stands up in the stands and he puts out his hand and it's either live or die.

And that's exactly what it was for Esther at that moment, wasn't it? So the king stretches out his hand and then a big smile comes upon his face and he says, Esther, how wonderful to see you. What can I do for you? Anything that you want, I'll give to you. I'll give to you up to half of my kingdom.

What would you like? Well, this was Esther's moment, wasn't it? Esther to go before the king and maybe get down on her knees and beg him, oh, king, please don't kill me and please don't kill my people, which would have come to a big surprise to the king because he didn't even know that Esther was Jewish. He didn't even know that she was under this law that was going to take an effect in 11 months. But when she had this opportunity to ask whatever she wanted of the king of Persia, do you know what she said? She said, King, would you like to come to dinner tonight? You and me and Haman, let's all come to dinner.

The king smiled. He knew that that's not what Esther really wanted, but he said, Esther, I'd be delighted to come to dinner with you tonight. Let's come together.

And so that's what they did. They got together with dinner that night. And do you know how pleased Haman must have been to get that invitation? I mean, he got the invitation to come to a special dinner with him, the king and the queen.

And he knew that he was the top guy in all of the kingdom next to the king and the queen. So he goes to the dinner that night. And, oh, it's a wonderful scene.

You know, Esther arranged everything just right. She used all of her, you know, decorating charms and all of her fashionable things and everything just to create the right atmosphere. And there it is, the king and the queen and Haman together.

And the king knows, you know, Esther, I know this isn't what you really wanted. I know you want something else. Esther, what do you want? Anything you ask up to half of my kingdom and I'll give it to you.

This was Esther's moment, Esther's moment to plead for her life, for her and for her people. But for some reason. She says, King.

Could you come to dinner again tomorrow night? But you and me and Haman, for some reason, she didn't make the request even at the banquet. My wife, Ingalil, is a very gifted teacher of the Bible. She's a big part of our Bible college staff and the Lord's given her a ministry all over the place of teaching women.

She thinks that Esther didn't make the request because, well, she just knew at that moment that it wasn't the right time. And she just had that womanly instinct and discernment from the Holy Spirit and just from wisdom to know it's not the right time. I'm not going to ask right now.

And maybe that's it. Probably right, because my wife is usually right about such things. But it's also possible that Esther didn't ask just because she was scared.

You know, it was a big request. It was the make it or break it moment. And I don't know about you, but sometimes I at those kind of moments, I've just procrastinated.

Right. You want to put it off a little bit and delay. So I don't know the exact reason.

Maybe it was just out of that anointed wisdom and discernment. Maybe it was a mixture of fear and procrastination. I don't know.

But she said at the bottom line, let's do it tomorrow evening at another banquet. So the king smiled. Oh, Esther, I know something's up your sleeve.

I know something is in the works, but I'd be pleased to come to another dinner with you tomorrow night. And Haman as well. Well, can you imagine how great Haman felt when he went to the home that night? He said, man, I am the most privileged guy in all the kingdom.

Everywhere I go, people bow down to me. Everywhere I go, I get respect. And now I've been invited to a special dinner with the king and queen.

And if that's not enough, they want me to come back tomorrow night for a special private banquet with them. I'm in the best place in all the kingdom. And as he's walking home, people are bowing down to him left and right.

Yes, Lord Haman. Yes, Lord Haman, except for one guy, Mordecai, the Jew. And he's standing and he's watching Haman go by.

And you can just imagine what it was like when their eyes met, just the look that would go between them. And by the time Haman got home, instead of being happy because it was the best day of his life, he was absolutely miserable. So I said, what's wrong? And Haman says, I hate my life.

I have everything. I have all the money I want. I have all the power I want.

I have people bowing down to me left and right. I get special dinners with the king and the queen. I've got everything.

But none of it is any good as long as Haman, the Jew, doesn't bow down to me. And his wife and his friends were sick of hearing this for months and months. So they finally said, listen, just kill the guy.

Don't wait until that day comes 11 months from now. Just kill him right now. We suggest that you make a gallows 75 feet high and hang him on the gallows and that'll be the end of Mordecai.

I need to explain to you what's meant by that idea of the gallows. When we use the English word gallows, we think of a wooden structure, perhaps, where somebody is hung by the neck. Right.

Isn't that what we think of? Execution by hanging. That's not what it means in the ancient Hebrew. What they're talking about, building a gallows 75 feet high.

They're talking about building a giant platform with a wooden log that sharpened on the top. If you easily grossed out, you might want to close your ears right here. How they would execute people on this stake is they would just jam their body on top of that pointed wooden stick and leave them there until they died.

Build a gallows, but you know what I mean by gallows, right? Build a gallows 75 feet high and stick Mordecai on it and then you'll be happy. And Haman says, yes, then I'll be happy. And he cheered up again.

He said, all I got to do is go to the king and ask for the permission to do this to Mordecai and everything will be great. And Haman felt much better. Well, meanwhile, back at the palace, the king couldn't sleep that night, maybe decided to go to bed early, tried to count sheep that didn't work, tried a glass of warm milk that didn't work.

He still can't sleep. Isn't that funny? He's the master of the greatest empire on earth, but he's not the master of 10 minutes of sleep. And so he decides, well, I need somebody to read to me a story, somebody to get my mind off of it.

And, you know, then maybe I could fall asleep. And so he claps his hand and he tells an assistant, go get something to read to me. The assistant runs into another room where they've got the library, the archives, and he's looking over this shelf with all these books or all these scrolls.

And he finally says, well, I'll pick this one. And he runs back into King Ahasuerus and he says, well, I need to start reading somewhere. I'll start here.

And he starts reading. And you know what story he starts reading at? It's the story of Mordecai and how Mordecai saved the king's life by uncovering this assassination plot. Well, the king says, I love this story.

This is great. This guy saved my life. Man, I love this.

Can you read it again? And he reads it again. Man, this is a great story. This man, Mordecai, saved my life.

I like that. We want to encourage this kind of behavior. I want people to say we need to reward this man, Mordecai.

What did we do for that Mordecai guy who saved my life? Well, the assistants looked at each other and they said, King, we didn't do anything for him. And the king says, oh, that's bad. We we want people to be excited about saving my life.

This is the kind of behavior we want to encourage. We have to do something to honor Mordecai. What should we do? Give me one of my assistants so that we can talk about this.

Well, just at that moment, Haman walked into the outer courts of the king and somebody said, you know, Haman just walked into the outer courts and the king says, great, bring him to me. Can you imagine if you're Haman? Somebody runs up to you in the outer court, say, hey, the king wants to see you. Well, Haman came to ask for the permission to execute Mordecai.

And he's thinking, oh, this is great. This is the best day ever. I don't have to ask to go see the king.

He wants to see me. I'm just going to walk right in and get it done and Mordecai will be dead. So they lead Haman in to the king's bedroom and the king says, oh, Haman, I'm so glad to see you.

Isn't it wonderful that you've just come here? It's just great. He goes, Haman, I've got a question for you. What should I do for the man who I really want to honor? Now, you know, Haman, right? What's he

thinking? He's thinking, oh, he wants to honor me.

This is great. And it shows you how childish it is. OK, what do we do for the man whom the king wants to honor? And you can just think of a little thought balloon going up, up above Haman's head right there.

And he pictures himself clothed in the king's robe. And he goes, oh, well, first, King, you should put your robe upon him. Oh, that'll look so good.

And then what he does next is he says, listen, King, put him on your horse. Yeah, let him ride your royal horse. And then third, he goes, get a man of high standing in the government and have him lead the horse all around the city square, shouting out this is what the king does for the man he wants to honor.

And all the while Haman is thinking, yes, that's going to be me. He can almost smell the horse right then and there. Right.

So the king hears this and he says, Haman, that's a great idea. Go find Mordecai the Jew and you lead him around the city square and shout out. You know, up until that point, Haman had been having the best day of his life.

It suddenly turned into the worst day of his life. And so that's what he had to do in just a few hours later, there was Mordecai dressed in the king's robe, sitting on the king's horse. And worst of all, Haman has to lead the horse around the city square like a servant boy and cry out to everybody, this is what the king does for the man that he wants to honor.

Can you imagine, I just picture Mordecai looking down at Haman and saying, gee, Haman, I didn't know you felt this way about me. I always thought you kind of didn't like me, but I guess we're friends now. Poor, poor Haman.

He went home after that torturous ordeal, feeling like it was the worst day of his entire life. And he walks in there, he says, oh, you can't believe it to his wife. The worst thing happened today.

And he explains her the whole story. And the wife says, listen, Haman, don't talk to me about your problems. You got another banquet to go to at the king's palace.

It's the night of the second banquet. Haman says, you're right. So he changes his clothes.

He gets ready to go and he goes into the king's palace there in time for the second banquet. So there you are at the second banquet. Right.

You have the king. You have Esther, you have Haman. Haman's the one who looks depressed and they're all sitting around the table eating the meal and the king knows.

Right. The king knows that Esther has yet to make a request. So he says, OK, Esther, what is it? I know this isn't just about banquets.

What do you want? I'll give you anything you want up to half of the kingdom. Esther phrases it just in the right manner, using all of her wisdom. Some of her charm, too, I'm sure.

And she comes before the king and she says, King. Just don't kill me, please, don't kill me and my people. Now, remember, up to this point, the king never even knew that she was Jewish and the king says, well,

what are you talking about, Esther, who wants to kill you? You're the queen of Persia.

Anybody who wants to kill my wife, you better tell me, who is it that wants to kill you and your people? Esther looks over at Haman. That's the one who wants to kill me. In an instant, the king knew exactly what had happened in an instant.

The king knew that he had been tricked into passing that law and that Haman was the one who deceived him, but that he couldn't change it because this was the law of the Persians, that you can't change a law once you pass it. And he was so filled with anger that he had to leave the room just to collect his thoughts for a minute. Believe me, Haman knew that the worst day of his life was just about ready to get worse.

And so he says, my only hope is to tell Esther how sorry I am and to appeal for mercy before Esther. And so he gets up to go over to Esther. Esther's apparently reclining on a couch or something, and he gets over to make an appeal to Esther to beg for mercy.

But somehow, somehow, as he's going over to get on his knees and to beg before Esther, he trips on the way over there. And it ends up that he falls right on top of Esther. Right at that moment, the king walked back in and he looked at Haman and he said, are you going to attack my wife while I'm right here in the room? You know, the Jewish rabbis say that an angel pushed Mordecai, excuse me, Haman pushed Haman, and that's why he fell upon Esther.

Well, I don't believe it was an angel, but I believe well, I believe the Lord's hand was in it nonetheless. And so that was the last thing that Haman ever heard. They came and put a bag on his head and let him out of execution.

And do you know how they executed him? They put him on the same gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. But what's going to become of the Jewish people? You can't change the law, right? And the date for this attack upon the Jewish people is still established. So what did the king do? Well, he just simply passed another law allowing the Jews to be armed and prepared and ready for anybody who would attack them on that day.

And because of that, they were able to come back and counteract the attack. And everything came down to that moment. The Jews were protected and the only ones killed were the ones who wanted to attack the Jews.

It was a beautiful example of God's deliverance of his people. And that's why the Jewish people made it a great holiday. You know, Purim, it's one of the important holidays on the Jewish calendar.

And it remembers the deliverance that God brought in the days of Esther. Now, let me remind you of something. There's another holiday that's somewhat similar, and that's the holiday of Passover, which remembers God's deliverance in the days of Moses and the deliverance from Egypt.

But I want you to think about the comparing Passover with Purim. When God delivered Israel from Egypt, it was with a thousand miracles, plagues of lice, plagues of locusts, plagues of hail, manna, the Red Sea parting over and over again. It was like a daily miracle.

How many miracles did God use in delivering Israel in the days of Esther? Not one obvious miracle. Do you understand something about the book of Esther? That there are some people who say that it doesn't even belong in the Bible. You know why? They say it doesn't belong in the Bible because the name of God

is not mentioned in it once.

Well, I think those people are misguided because the hand of God is evident on every single page of the book of Esther. I mean, God arranged everything. Do you like that verse, Romans 8, 28? God works everything to good for those who love him, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Listen, the book of Esther is the carrying out of Romans 8, 28 at one specific time in the history of Israel. Think about everything that God arranged in the book of Esther. He arranged for Queen Vashti to lose her place.

He arranged for there to be a competition to replace her. He arranged for Esther to enter the competition. He arranged for Esther to get special favor among the harem.

He arranged for Esther to win. He arranged for there to be 11 months before the attack takes place. He arranged for Esther to delay the banquet until the right moment.

He arranged for Haman's anger to come to a peak on a particular day. He arranged for Ahasuerus to have a sleepless night. And he arranged for one book to be taken off the shelf at a particular time, at a particular moment.

God arranged everything. His hand was absolutely sovereign. And so this is the lesson for you to learn from this.

God will deliver his people. Sometimes he'll deliver them like Passover with obvious miracles. Other times he will deliver them like Purim by working his glorious hand behind the scenes in a very naturally supernatural way.

Charles Spurgeon said of the story of Esther that it is a wonder without a miracle. I like that. It's God doing great things without an obviously supernatural thing.

There's something else to this. It shows us that God's use of his sovereign plan in history never rules out our own actions. Did you notice that? What did Ahasuerus do? What he wanted to do? What did Haman do? What he wanted to do? What did Esther and Mordecai do? What they wanted to do? Yet God folded it all together perfectly in a supernatural plan.

The story of Esther also shows us that God in his wise and providential plan allows his people to be tested. Don't we sometimes think that if God is really in charge, then why doesn't he make it easier for me? Listen, the story of Esther shows us that even when God is completely in charge, he knows exactly how to use it for the benefit of his people, even in testing them. Well, make no mistake about it.

This was a severe trial for Esther and for Mordecai and for all involved. Yet nevertheless, God was in control of it all. Let me conclude with one final point here.

I think any time that we study the Old Testament, we should look to see what it tells us about Jesus. Don't you think so? Well, where do you see Jesus in the book of Esther? You look high and low, I don't know, where do you see Jesus in the book of Esther? Let me explain it to you this way. Let's say that you were a Jewish person somewhere in the Persian Empire and you heard that a law was passed that commanded that you be put to death, that the king's law says that you must die.

There's no way around it, right? You live in the kingdom of a mighty king and the king's law says that you must die and you feel there's no way out of it until you remember. I have a friend next to the throne of the king. Esther, let's ask Esther to intercede on our behalf, let's use Esther as a mediator and as a go between.

And because I have a friend next to the throne, I can be spared from the king's law that says that I must die. Do you see Jesus in the book of Esther now? Let me put it to you just very straightforwardly, there's no reason to mince words, I'll just say it as directly as I can. The king's law says that you must die.

The Bible says that the soul that sins, it will die. Nevertheless, the glorious truth is that we have a friend next to the throne of God, Jesus Christ, our friend who says, I will intercede for you, I will intercede and make a difference when the king's law says that you must die. Nevertheless, I'll only do it at your invitation.

Isn't that what you want? Don't you want Jesus to be your friend next to the throne? This is the difference that you should make today, that you should say, listen, Jesus, I will look to you to save me from the command of the king's law. This is my salvation. Well, I think it's only fitting, Pastor Pat, would you please come on up and close the service with prayer? Thank you.

All right, let's stand together. The question that I have before we dismiss is simply what has God been arranging in your life? What has he been setting you up for? Why are you a church? Some of you, how many of you are believers, just love the Lord, put them up. Thank you, Lord.

Now, I couldn't tell from all of you who put your hands up who didn't. But if you didn't put your hand up, you're in the middle of a setup. Amen.

I mean, where else could you be on Sunday morning? What else could you be doing today? In fact, you're even here with a time change. Is that the hand of God or what? And it's simply I think I just think I didn't know what David was going to teach until he came this morning. And what a what a beautiful message of God's hand and God's care.

Even though it was a tough situation, God still moved. God still had his hand on the pulse of what was happening. And I don't know what it is in your life that is still crying out for Jesus or crying out.

Maybe you don't even know it's Jesus that you're crying out for. Except that there's a ache, there's an emptiness and you've been trying to fill it with lots of other things. But all that is just bringing you to the place to realize that only one can fill.

That empty place in your life. And that's the son of God. It's not a quick fix.

It's an eternal rework where you're born again. And you're going to be part of his family forever. It doesn't end just when these old bodies wear out.

It'll go on past that on into eternity. And it just breaks my heart that so many people go through this life without knowing that, without having that peace and that rest, without having that change of heart. A change wrought by God working in you, not by somebody forcing you to change, but just the presence of God in your life.

And so we want to invite you this morning to come to Christ, to get right with him. And if you don't know the Lord, but you want to know him this morning, put your hand up and we'll pray for you right now. Why?

Why? Why go out of here as confused as you were when you came in? You know, why not go out of here knowing, not just wishing, but knowing that your sins are forgiven, knowing that Christ died for you personally, that you could live forever with him.

If you don't know that, but you want to this morning, put your hand up and we'll just pray right now that you would know the Lord and that he would meet you right where you're at today. As I look out across you, I see faces that I see every week. And I love you and I hope you love me, too, and that we're growing together in love.

But we know as a family, when we oftentimes in a family, we have problems. Sometimes it's with other people in the family. Sometimes sibling rivalry.

Sometimes somebody does something that that isn't right and it hurts the rest of the family. And as we come together like this on Sunday morning, it's an opportunity for us to get things right that may not be right. To confess our sin, and maybe you already know the Lord, but you haven't been living like it.

You haven't been walking and trusting, you've drifted. And the Lord would say to you, come back, come home, get right. And how many of us have known the God of the second chance and the third and the fifth and the tenth? And I'm amazed at how patient he is with me.

And if he's that patient with me, I know he's going to be patient with you to call you and to draw you to himself. But maybe at one time you did ask the Lord to take over in your life that something's not right and you know it. And you need to talk to your friend that's next to the throne.

And get right this morning. And if that's you and you need prayer this morning, put your hand up and we'll pray for you this morning. God bless you guys.

Anyone else? Amen, man. Back on the side here. And just if you're just saying, would you pray for me? And I think we'll just pray for one another right now and we'll close the service.

OK, so once you again take take the hand of someone next to you. OK, and let's just pray for one another. All right.

Heavenly Father. Lord, as we hold each other's hands, Lord, we thank you. That you have gone before us, Lord, and because of Jesus.

We can reach out and hold your hand and you reach out to us and we thank you so much, Lord. And we ask you right now, Lord, particularly for those that needed to get right with you, Lord, you know their hearts. And we just ask you, Lord, to wash them this morning.

Lord, as they've come before you and asked to be forgiven and asked to be restored and to be drawn close, Lord, that you would just do a mighty work in their lives. God, we pray that you would just pour out your spirit upon their lives, that they wouldn't look to the left or to the right, but that they'd look right to you, Jesus. And we ask you to bless them, Lord, to raise them up, Lord, and use them for your glory, that they wouldn't be running around the edges of the camp, but they would be right in the middle, God, of what you want to do.

Thank you for being such a forgiving God. Jesus, thank you for bleeding and dying that we could have life and have it more abundantly. And so, Lord, would you just touch these folks, Lord, and renew their hearts

and lives in you today.

In Jesus name, Amen.

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