

If I Perish I Perish-01 Ministry From Esther

by Major Ian Thomas

The sermon emphasizes the importance of a living relationship with Jesus Christ, the discovery of spiritual truth, and the struggle between good and evil in the human soul, highlighting the need for the Holy Spirit to guide and empower us.

Duration: 1:27:41

Scripture: Genesis 21:9, Matthew 6:33, John 10:10, Romans 8:16, Galatians 4:24, Ephesians 1:13

Topics: "Esther"

Description

The sermon transcript discusses the concept of victorious living and spiritual experience. It emphasizes the importance of understanding the Bible as a whole and not detaching any part from the rest. The story presented in the transcript portrays man's fallen condition and the need to replace the wrong influences with the right ones. The speaker highlights the transformative power of the gospel in getting the wrong man out and the right man in, leading to a radical change in one's life. The transcript also includes a personal testimony of how the lectures on the topic have had a profound impact on the student's spiritual journey.

Transcript

A recording of If I Perish, I Perish, by W. E. N. Thomas, commencing in Chapter 1. I'm tired of religion, and to be entirely honest, I know of nothing quite so boring as Christianity without Christ. Have you ever tried to start a car without fuel, until there wasn't a spark left in the battery? Then you will know exactly what I mean, for there are few things more frustrating than a car that will not go. Everything is nicely greased and in its rightful place, and all the working parts move beautifully, but try as you may, there isn't a suspicion of a kick, nor the tiniest evidence of life in the engine.

You might just as well dump the thing, for all the chance you have of getting it on the move. Countless people have stopped going to a place of worship, simply because they are sick of going through the motions of a dead religion. They're tired of trying to start a car on an empty tank.

What a pity it is that there are not a few more people around to tell them that Jesus Christ is alive. I spoke of nothing more boring than Christianity without Christ, but I know of nothing so exciting, utterly exciting, than being a Christian, sharing the very life of Jesus Christ on earth, right here and now, and being caught up with him into the relentless, invincible purposes of an almighty God, and with all the limitless resources of deity available for the job. Can you imagine anything more exciting than that? Do you know what it is to

live purposely? Is there an urgent sense of mission, or some compelling thrust within you which makes life add up to the sheer adventure that God always intended life to be? Or are you simply engaged in the struggle for existence and survival? Worse still, far from being caught up into the invincible purposes of an almighty God, have you been caught up into the rat race of competitive existence, haunted by the fear of being overtaken on the bend, breathlessly trying to keep abreast of events that travel faster than your capacity to cope with them? If so, I think you will be interested in the following extracts from a letter I received several years ago from a student attending Bible college.

I am writing to thank you for your six devotional lectures, the effect of which, upon my life, it would be difficult to exaggerate. I have been a Christian for four years, but I came home feeling like a person who has just discovered that he has passed the last four years sitting unwittingly on a million pounds. Only the riches I have discovered cannot justly be compared to that sort of trace.

That is how the letter began, and I would like to share with you a little more of what he had to say. I believe that God prepared me for those lectures. Last term, I had to prepare a talk on I Am the Truth from John's Gospel, chapter 14, verse 6. One of the two main headings under which I was collecting and jotting down my thoughts was, Jesus is the Truth.

The fundamental characteristic of truth is consistency. It must fit every known and unknown fact and situation, and its absence. I get the picture in my mind of a giant jigsaw puzzle.

If I have anything but the truth, at least one of the pieces will not fit, and others will need forcing into place. The fundamental idea behind Jesus is the truth was that Jesus is the key to the understanding of all things, and almost the first thing you said was that the Lord Jesus Christ is the final exegesis of all things. Thus God prepared my mind.

As I listened, as I copied up my notes, and as ever since I have read my Bible and thought about it, pieces of the jigsaw puzzle have been falling over each other in their eagerness to tumble into place. It is as if I had been collecting pieces for the past four years, but just flinging them into the box without any real thought of fitting them together. Now, each time I come across one of these pieces, it seems to fit into the total scheme of spiritual life, and into the whole scheme of things in general, from verses of Scripture to insignificant things of everyday experience.

I find it difficult to describe the sense of being utterly at one and in harmony with the Lord Jesus. Spiritual wisdom has become part of a sum total of experience, rather than something detached and fragmental. My life since my conversion has been one of striving to work for Christ, instead of letting Him work through me.

What a difference there is now that He, and not work for Him, has the preeminence. Now I really realize that not only am I in Christ, but that Christ is in me. I also realize that there is no further basic issue to face.

Humanly speaking, those six lectures have helped me more than all the talks, lectures, sermons, books, and examples which I have experienced since my conversion. The Lord Jesus said, I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I know now what He meant, because I have it.

The writer of this letter was a pilot with the Missionary Aviation Fellowship in Ethiopia, and quite recently flew me over the mountains in Japan, Hispanola. It was thrilling to discover that the intervening years had

served only to establish ever more firmly in his own experience the principles of true discipleship which he had so readily embraced. Trading his poverty for Christ's wealth, his weakness for Christ's strength, this young man has exchanged the bankruptcy of the fallen Adam for all the fullness of the life of Christ, and has discovered the sheer adventure of allowing Jesus Christ to be God in his own experience.

For God He is. I wonder whether you have learned to do the same. To detach your Christianity from Christ is to reduce it to the impotence of a dead religion, impersonal to him and impersonal to you.

It is just an intellectual exercise, or a sentimental formula, and Christianity is neither. Christianity is Christ. It involves a principle of life which pulsates with divine energy, and cannot be explained apart from God Himself.

It is essentially miraculous, even though it does not have to be sensational. It is always supernatural, in that it lies beyond the scope of mortal man apart from the indwelling presence of the Risen Son of God. It is with the object of making the same wonderful discovery that we are about to embark together upon this series of studies in the book of Esther.

You may be somewhat surprised at my choice of the book of Esther for this particular purpose, but I know of no other single book in the whole of the Old Testament which more lucidly illustrates the principles governing the Christian life. Nor is there a book which demonstrates more clearly what spiritual rebirth really involves, and what conditions must be met to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to become effective for God. Within the pages of the book of Esther, there is to be found a wealth of understanding concerning the implications of true discipleship, and concerning that relentless war for final supremacy being waged within the soul of man between good and evil, between God and the devil.

It is fascinating beyond description to find, with the unfolding of the story, so meticulous an explanation of so much that often baffles the honest but hard-pressed elite. If you are genuinely concerned to find the key to victorious living, and to that dimension of spiritual experience that makes you more than conqueror, then read on, and join me in the desperation. Before we begin to examine the story, I would like to say a word concerning Bible exegesis, or exposition, which I trust may be helpful to all, and especially to those whose responsibility it is to take the Word of God and unfold its message to us.

It is important to bear in mind that the whole Bible throughout both Old and New Testaments is a total revelation authored by the Holy Spirit, and that no part may be detached from the rest, nor be incompatible to the truth as consistently revealed throughout the whole of Scripture. In the fourth chapter of his Epistles to the Galatians, and with reference to the birth of Isaac and Ishmael, Paul writes in the twenty-fourth verse which things are an allegor. The Apostle clearly recognizes that behind the historical events there is a unique symbolism by which the Holy Spirit has chosen to illustrate in the Old Testament spiritual truth enunciated in the New Testament.

It is a correct understanding of this hidden symbolism which offers to us the key to correct spiritualization, which in turn provides the basis for accurate biblical illustration. Correct spiritualization provides the expositional constants to which all biblical illustration must be true, if it is to be accurate and safe, for these constants involve principles which may never be violated. Allow me to explain to you what I mean by an expositional constant.

The Holy Spirit, as author of the Bible, has chosen particular people, nations, countries, animals, or inanimate objects as symbols with which to convey certain different spiritual meanings. Once you have

learned the language of the Holy Spirit, and recognized one of these symbols in any particular portion of the Bible, you will be alerted to the fact that he is making reference to that which is represented by the particular symbol which he is using. It is the spiritual significance of these symbols which I have described above as a spiritual constant, because of the relentless consistency with which the Holy Spirit uses these symbols throughout the whole of the Bible.

One such which readily comes to mind is oil, which in both Old and New Testaments always represents the person, office, and work of the Holy Spirit himself, as indeed do wind and fire. Another which I am sure you will recognize at once as being equally obvious is the snake or serpent, used by the Holy Spirit to represent Satan, or the sin that has its origin in Satan. The devil is pictured as a serpent in the record of man's fall into sin, Genesis chapter 3 verse 1, and is directly referred to in this way in the twelfth and twentieth chapters of the Revelation, that old serpent which is the devil.

Paul was certainly in no doubt as to whom he was referring in the second of his epistles to the Corinthians, chapter 3 verse 11, but I fear less by any means as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtleties, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ spoke of the Pharisees as a generation of vice, having told them plainly, Ye are of your father the deaf, and the lusts of your father ye will do. John's Gospel, chapter 8, verse 44.

An allegory is the describing of a subject under the guise of another which resembles and suggests it, as, of course, was the case in the use made by the Lord Jesus of parables. By this means he clarified the truth which he wished to communicate, underlined it, and impressed it upon his hearing. Another example of an allegory in more recent times is Bunyan's Children's Progress, or his Holy War, and a still more recent authorship, The Screwtapes Letters, by C.S. Lewis.

I would like to make it clear to you, therefore, at the outset of our journey together, that although there is in my mind absolutely no doubt as to the historical accuracy or divine authorship of the book of Esther, I shall be using the story as an allegory, clarify and illustrate spiritual truths soundly established and substantiated elsewhere in the Bible, and all of which must be entirely compatible with the total revelation given to us by the Holy Spirit in the whole of the Scripture. This being so, I need hardly say that I do not claim any monopoly whatsoever in the interpretation of the book of Esther, but simply add these thoughts to the countless others which have already been legitimately expressed with the earnest prayer that God may be pleased to own them and to honor them in the hearts of my readers, and that, as one such, you personally may be enriched and encouraged in your knowledge of our wonderful Lord Jesus Christ, and that, in consequence, He, for His part, may be allowed to enter ever more fully into His inheritance in your lives. It might not seem to you entirely logical, but I would like you to begin with me at chapter three in the book of Esther, for in the first two verses we are introduced to three characters, all of whom play a significant role in the unfolding of the story.

After these things did King Ahasuerus promote Haman, the son of Hammedator, the Abagite, and advance him, and set his feet above all the princes that were with him. And all the king's servants that were in the king's gates bowed and revered Haman, for the king had so commanded concerning him, but Mordecai bowed not, nor did he reverence. King Ahasuerus reigned, we are told, in chapter one, verse one, from India unto Ethiopia, over a hundred and seven and twenty provinces, and may well be identified with the better-known King Exepsi, who reigned from 486 to 465 B.C. The Zonderman Pictorial Bible Dictionary gives four close similarities between them which support this identification, and in the same volume it is noted that in all probability the Ahasuerus of Ezra, chapter four, verse six, is also the same

person.

As the king and his palace, Ahasuerus will represent for us the soul of man, for it was within the palace that decisions were made, policies declared, and decrees published. The kingdom of 127 provinces will represent the human body, for throughout the length and breadth of the land the laws promulgated in the palace have their repercussions being communicated in this way to the outside world. From the largest city to the tiniest village, the conduct of the people and the way they behaved was affected by the king's command.

It is within the soul that human behavior is determined, for it is within the soul that decisions are made, plans conceived, and the will exercised to bring the body into action. In this way the thoughts and the intents of the heart may be communicated to the outside world in terms of human behavior. I have dealt more fully with the function of the soul as the seat of human behavior in the Mystery of Godness, in the chapter entitled The Nature of a Man, but it is necessary here to remind you that the will is exercised under the influence of the mind and the emotions.

Whatever influence it may be that controls the mind and the emotions will ultimately control the will, and this fact leads us to consider the role of Haman the Agagite in the story recorded in the book of Acts. Haman the Agagite will represent what in the New Testament is called the flesh not, of course, the human body, but that perverted principle which perpetuates in man Satan's proud hostility and enmity against God. You will notice that from the outset of the story Haman is already deeply entrenched within the palace, firmly established in the king's affections, and enjoying his complete confidence, for he advanced him and set his feet above all the princes at the witness.

In his presence, as an act of reverence, every head had to bow. Haman, from within the palace, had constant, unhindered access to the king, and in his own subtle way coloured the king's thinking, stirred the king's emotions, and with his malicious evil influence moulded the king's decisions, so that by every royal decree to the very extremities of the kingdom the character of this wicked man made its impact upon the nation. On the other hand, sitting in the king's gate outside the palace, and having no access to the king, and exercising no influence whatsoever over him, was one who refused to bow in the presence of Haman.

His name was Morikei. Morikei will represent the person of the Holy Spirit, of whose presence the unregenerate soul is destitute, and you and I were born in this unregenerate condition. The Holy Spirit is the inveterate soul of the flesh, for the flesh laughs at against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other.

Galatians chapter 5 verse 17 No doubt by now you are beginning to get the picture. Here is man in his fallen condition, his soul dominated by the flesh, and destitute of the Holy Spirit, just as the king was dominated by Haman, and deprived of the counsel of Morikei. Man's humanity is prostituted by Satan, and deprived of those gracious and benevolent influences of the Spirit of Christ, by whose indwelling it was God's original intention that man should share his life, and become by creation a partaker of the divine nature.

The story begins with the wrong man in, and the right man out, and the problem to be resolved becomes quite obviously apparent. How to get the wrong man out, and the right man in. This is what the gospel is all about.

Quite obviously, to get the wrong man out and the right man in, and thus to exchange the malicious evil influence of Haman for the gracious benevolent influence of Morikei, is going to involve an entirely new situation within the palace, and a radical change of government. Needless to say, such a change of government within the palace is going to have far-reaching consequences throughout the kingdom. No one will be left in any doubt as to what is really happening.

In the spiritual sense, nothing less than this will be involved, if in becoming a Christian, it is your desire to be the Christian that you have become. Amalek, at it again. You may wonder why things are beginning for Haman, and may ask, why have you got your knife into him? What has Haman done to deserve it? And what reasonable excuse do you have for painting such a sinister picture of the man? Maybe you even feel a little sympathy for Haman, and think that it is presumption on my part to blacken his character without ever having put him on trial, allow me to disillusion you, gentle friend, if out of charity you feel inclined to champion his cause.

Haman is full of hate, and hidden in his heart, beneath the veneer of disarming charm, there is murder in the making. His ways are the ways of death. It is in the person of Haman that we are alerted by the Holy Spirit to the main thrust of the book, for if we examine his pedigree, we discover in Haman one of those expositional constants to which I have already made reference in the preceding chapter.

Haman did not like the Jew. This is a fact which we may readily ascertain from the most casual reading of the text. And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman, the son of Hamadathah, the Agagite, the Jew's enemy.

Chapter 3, verse 10. On that day did the king Ahasuerus give the house of Haman, the Jew's enemy, unto Esther the queen. Chapter 8, verse 1. The ten sons of Haman, the son of Hamadathah, the enemy of the Jews, slew they, but on the spoil laid they not their hands.

Chapter 9, verse 10. Because Haman, the son of Hamadathah, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them. Chapter 9, and verse 24.

Why did Haman hate the Jews? Did he not like the look of their faces? Or was there a deeper significance to this murderous hostility, in which was to be conceived the bloodthirsty plan to destroy, to kill, and of course to perish all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirtieth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adah, to take the spoil of them for a prey. Chapter 3, and verse 13. In my book, *The Saving Life of Christ*, I have devoted two chapters to the study of Amalek, grandson of Ethel, and father of the Amalekites, with whom God had declared himself to be at war from generation to generation.

If you have not already had occasion to read *The Saving Life of Christ*, please forgive my boldness in suggesting that you take the earliest opportunity of doing so, for its contents, especially in reference to Amalek, have a strong bearing upon the spiritual contents of the book of Esther. Suffice it, however, for the moment, that we might get the sense of the matter, to make this quotation. In Esau, the spirit of Satan was incarnate.

What do I need of a birthright restoring me to dependence upon God? I am independent, and I am self-sufficient, and I will be what I am by virtue of what I am. Why did God hate Esau? Because God can do absolutely nothing with a man who will not admit that he needs anything from God. Esau rejected God's means of grace.

He repudiated man's need of God's intervention. He despised his birthright. And God never forgave him.

This is the basic attitude of sin. It makes God irrelevant to the stern business of living, and gives to man a flattering sense of self-importance. God can do nothing for the man eaten up with the spirit of Esau.

Amalek was Esau's grandson, and Malachi tells us that the descendants of Esau were a people against whom the Lord had indignation forever. Malachi 1.4 And Exodus 17 tells us that God was at war with Amalek from generation to generation. Perpetuated in Amalek was the profanity of Esau, the man who refused the birthright.

There was no good thing in Amalek. There was absolutely no salvageable content in Amalek. There was nothing in Amalek upon which God would look with favor.

That was God's mind, God's will, and God's judgment concerning Amalek. But Saul forgot to remember. Though he smote the Amalekites, Saul took Agag, the king of the Amalekites, alive, a king of Edom whom God had sentenced to death.

Saul presumed to find something good in what God had condemned. This was the sin of Saul. He kept the best of what God had hated.

So Agag was an Edomite, a descendant of Esau, the despiser of the birthright. And Agag was the king of the Amalekites. Thus Haman was also an Amalekite, for Haman was an Agagite.

Esther chapter 3 verse 1. And the Amalekites were the inveterate enemies of Israel. In the person of Haman, descendant of Agag, king of the Amalekites, Amalek was at it again. As Satan hated God, so Cain hated Abel.

And Ishmael hated Isaac. And as Ishmael hated Isaac, so Esau hated Jacob. And Amalek hated Israel.

And as Amalek hated Israel, so Haman hated the Jews. In this connection, it is interesting to note that Herod the Great, who in his attempt to kill the Lord Jesus, ordered the destruction of all the children in Bethlehem, two years of age and under, was an Edomite. According to John Peter Lange's commentary on Matthew, Herod the Great was the first sovereign of the Idumean race of Edomites, which from the year 40 before Christ, reigned over Jerusalem under the supremacy of Rome.

Herod was an Amalekite, descendant of Esau, and of a kith and kin of Haman. In this commentary on Matthew's gospel, it is stated, and I quote from page 60, in the design of Herod, the old enmity of Edom against Jacob seems to reappear. We are involuntarily reminded of that murderous purpose, I will slay my brother Jacob, which Esau relinquished in his own person, but bequeathed to his posterity.

Genesis chapter 27 verse 41 Haman was true to his breed, and within his wicked heart there sieved this inherent enmity against the promised seed. For God had promised, there shall come a star out of Jacob, and a scepter shall arise out of Israel. Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion.

Numbers chapter 24 verses 17 and 19 Haman was a ready tool in the hands of the devil in the pursuit of Satan's vicious ambition to thwart God's redemptive and regenerated purpose, that of reestablishing his divine sovereignty within the soul of man. Here, indeed, was murder in the making. If there was one thing more than another which made Haman livid, it was the fact that in the king's gate there was one who looked him straight in the eyes with cold contempt, and whose head was never bowed in his presence.

Then the king's servants, which were in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king's commandment? Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman to see whether Mordecai's matter would stand. For he told them that he was a Jew. And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath.

Chapter Three, Verses Three and Five Haman recognized in Mordecai his arch-enemy, for in him he saw the ultimate of all that which elicited his hatred for the Jews. There is something frighteningly authoritative about the look of quiet, unflinching confidence upon the face of a man who knows that he is right, and at peace with God. The high priest and the council discovered this when, looking steadfastly on Stephen, they saw his face as it had been the face of an angel, and heard him denounce their guilt without any suggestion of apology, nor hint of fear.

In words which cut them to the heart, you stiff-necked and uncircumcised, in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost. As your fathers did, so do ye. And they gnashed on him with their teeth.

It was the look upon the face of the Lord Jesus Christ which perhaps more than anything else frightened Herod and Pontius Pilate on that day when they both washed their hands of him, and were made friends together. A bad conscience is always uneasy in the presence of truth, and whether it be in the presence of Mordecai, or Stephen, or the Lord Jesus Christ himself, it cries out hysterically, Hang him! Stone him! Crucify him! You may shoot truth between the eyes when it looks you quietly in the face, but it will not be truth which falls victim to your bullet. It was not truth that lay bleeding, dying on a stony slope on the day that Stephen was stoned to death, nor was it truth that hung upon a cross to be buried in a tomb.

Sin was there condemned, and Satan judged. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, enforced sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Romans, chapter eight, verses three and four.

On the third morning, truth was vindicated. Gospel truth. And Jesus Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection from death.

Romans, chapter one and four. The Son of God, who came into this world to get the wrong man out by taking the flesh into the place of death upon the cross, and to get the right man in by the gift of the Holy Spirit to those who claim redemption through his blood. He is the truth.

The truth that sets men free. Haman saw in the Jews a threat to his authority, a threat personified in the unbending defiance of Mordecai. And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had shown him the people of Mordecai.

Wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahazuel, even the people of Mordecai. And Haman said unto King Ahazuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom, and their laws are diverse from all people, neither keep they the king's laws. Therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer if it please the king.

Let it be written that they may be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business to bring it into the king's treasury. Chapter 3, verses 6, 8, and 9

Haman recognized that laws had been entrusted to the Jews which, were they to be imposed upon the land, would involve a radical change of government and introduce an entirely new way of life which would be incompatible with that which derived from his own evil influence. It was this that had to be resisted, at all costs.

Whose then were these laws entrusted to the Jews to which Haman took such strong exception? They were the oracles of God, and represented that true spiritual content of the Jewish nation of which, as a people, the Jews gave but feeble expression. For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh, but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God. What advantage, then, hath the Jew? Or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way, chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

Romans, chapter 2, verses 28 and 29, and chapter 3, verses 1 and 2. He declares his word to Jacob, his statutes and his ordinances to Israel. He hath not dealt so with any other nation. Psalm 147, verses 19 and 20, in the Campsified Bible.

Don't forget that in the unfolding of the story of the book of Esther, Haman represents for us the flesh, and Mordecai the Holy Spirit. And we understand from the epistles of the Romans that they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the spirit, the things of the spirit. So we may interpret Paul's words to the Roman Christians this way.

For to be carnally minded, Haman-minded, is death. But to be spiritually minded, Mordecai-minded, is life and peace. Because the carnal mind, the Haman mind, is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it.

Romans, chapter 8, verses 5 to 7. Being hostile to God himself, it follows that the flesh is hostile to the law of God, and any steps which God might take to re-establish His law in the heart of man will be resisted, tooth and nail. Being already entrenched within the human soul by nature, as Haman was already entrenched within the palace of the king, the flesh is in an admirable position to incite the mind, the emotions and the will of unregenerate man to defy God, resist His grace, and keep the right man out. It was to this end that Haman approached King Ahasuerus, representing the human soul, and persuaded him with his subtlety that the introduction of the divine law into the affairs of the kingdom could only be to the detriment of the king's best interests.

And that the voice, therefore, of this people, the Jews, who represented that law, must be ruthlessly silenced. This is a lie which continues to be propagated by Satan today, which signals success in the hearts of countless men and women, and boys and girls who have allowed themselves to be persuaded that to give themselves back to the God who made them, and to submit themselves to His sovereignty, is to be robbed of that liberty which makes life really worth living. Such people are not necessarily insincere in this conviction, but are the victims of their own ignorance, which makes them dupes of the devil, whose chiefest delight is to exploit that ignorance.

Their moral understanding is darkened, and their reasoning is beclouded. They are alienated, estranged, self-banished from the life of God, with no share in it. This is because of the ignorance, the want of knowledge and perception, the willful blindness that is deep-seated in them, due to their hardness of heart, to the insensitivity of their moral nature.

Ephesians chapter 4, verse 18, from the Amplified Bible. For the God of this world has blinded the unbelievers' minds that they should not discern the truth, preventing them from seeing the illuminating light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, the Messiah, who is the image and likeness of God. The second of Paul's epistles to the Corinthians, chapter 4, verse 4, from the Amplified Bible.

It is for this reason that so many do now what the king not insincerely did then. For he took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman, the son of Hamadathah, the Agagapteth, Jew's enemy. Chapter 3, verse 10.

To understand the interesting significance of this act, we need to turn to a parallel passage in the Old Testament found in the book of Genesis. It concerns Pharaoh's relationship to Joseph, as expressed in what Pharaoh had to say to Joseph in the day that he took his ring from off his own hand, and placed it upon Joseph's feet. Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled.

Only in the throne will I be greater than thou. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck.

And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had. And they cried before him, Bow the knee! And he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand nor foot in all the land of Egypt.

Genesis chapter 41, verses 40-44 In other words, this means that although Pharaoh retained his titular sovereignty, all the executive powers of government were vested in Joseph, and the symbol whereby this transfer of authority was sealed was Pharaoh's ring upon Joseph's finger. In the same way, King Ahasuerus expressed his utter confidence in Haman by placing his ring upon Haman's finger, thus investing him with all the executive powers of government throughout the length and the breadth of his kingdom. Thereafter, no inhabitant of the land might lift up his hand nor foot save at Haman's behest, and under his total jurisdiction.

King Ahasuerus was sold out to Haman utterly, as the soul of the unregenerate is sold out to the flesh, and his behavior subject to the demands of a rebel regime that denies to God his right to be God. Then were the king's scribes called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors that were of every province, and to the rulers of every people of every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language, in the name of King Ahasuerus was it written, and sealed with the king's ring. And the letters were sent out by post into all the king's province to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey.

Chapter 3, verses 12 and 13 Thus the murderous decree was published according to all that Haman had commanded, but in the name of King Ahasuerus was it written, and sealed with the king's ring. What a startlingly accurate picture this gives of the human soul, dominated by the flesh and becoming party, however unwittingly, to every carnal ambition that would silence the voice of God and resist the claim of his Holy Spirit. It is amazing with what enthusiasm man is prepared to allow his humanity to be prostituted by the devil.

And yet, even though he may seek to justify himself, and be persuaded of the virtue of his action, there is an intangible restlessness within that leaves him baffled and perplexed. For the posts went out, being hastened by the king's commandment, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace, and the king and Haman sat down to drink. But the city Shushan was perplexed.

There were strange whisperings in the city of Shushan, and little groups of people huddled together on the streets. As the king and Haman sat down to drink in this unholy alliance, somehow the people sensed that all was not well with the king. The city Shushan was perplexed.

Are there those indefinable moments in your life, the inaudible whisperings of a restless soul, moments of perplexity, when you sense that all is not well with you? Commencing chapter four of the book *If I Perish, I Perish*. With the approach of the day set for the massacre, the shadow of death hung heavily over all the Jews in the land. Nothing but a change of governments within the palace would have seemed to offer any hope of escape from the impending disaster, yet nothing seemed less likely than such a change of government.

If Mordecai held the key to their deliverance, the major problems still remained to be resolved. How to get the wrong man out and the right man in? Of all the lessons that the book of Esther has to teach us, perhaps the most important is this, that to get the wrong man out and the right man in, it is necessary first to get the right man in to get the wrong man out. Let us turn our attention for a moment to Mordecai and discover what we may have out here.

Now, in Shushan the palace, there was a certain Jew whose name was Mordecai, a Benjamite, who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jechoniah, king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, had carried away. Chapters 2, verses 5 and 6. This Mordecai is not to be confused with the one mentioned in the book of Ezra. Chapters 2, verse 2. Though he too had been carried away into captivity in Babylon.

Although the one may not be mistaken for the other, it is interesting to note that both, in a unique way, represent the gracious work of God, the Holy Spirit. It is recorded in the first chapter of the book of Ezra, that the Lord so stirred up the spirit of fire as king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kings, and he put it into writing, saying, Thus saith fire as king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? His God be with him.

And let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel. Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the Lord, which is in Jerusalem. Ezra, chapter 1, verses 2, 3, and 5 Among those who went up out of their captivity and returned to Jerusalem was this other Morikea.

Together with the rest, it was to be his noble office to rebuild the temple, and to cleanse it so that it might be filled again with the glory of God. This, of course, is the special work of the Holy Spirit in your life and mine, that our bodies, as temples of the living God, might be filled afresh with his glory, and be cleansed for his use as instruments of righteousness. Similarly, the picture presented to us in the book of Esther is of Morikea as representing the Holy Spirit, gaining access to the life of King Ahasuerus, representing the human soul, so that his own gracious and benevolent influence might replace the evil and malicious influence of the flesh, as represented by Haman, and that throughout the kingdom, representing the

human body, it might become gloriously obvious to the rest of the world that something wonderful has happened within the palace, changing completely the character of the land.

Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things have passed away. Behold, all things are become new, and all things are of God.

Second Epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 5, verses 17-18 The Holy Spirit receives I'm sure you have been wondering where Esther herself, from whom the book has gained its title, fits into the story. So let us consider for a moment the role she has to play. Before Morikea could come into the life of the king, he had first to come into the life of Esther, just as the Holy Spirit must first be restored to the human spirit before he can begin to take control within the human soul.

Esther, the queen, will represent the human spirit, just as Ahasuerus, the king, represents the human soul. The two are wedded, the one to the other, so they must not be confused the one for the other. It is fascinating to discover by what means Morikea came into the life of Esther, that through her he might come into the life of the king.

And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had neither father nor mother. And the maid was very fair and beautiful, whom Morikea, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter. Chapter 2, verse 7 Morikea came into the life of Esther on the basis of adoption.

What a beautiful picture this is of the Holy Spirit. As it became Morikea's responsibility to educate and care for Esther, disciplining her life, guiding her steps, and quickening within her a solemn sense of responsibility and divine destiny, so it is now the office of the Holy Spirit in your life to accomplish these things in you, leading you into all truth. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father. Romans, chapter 8, verses 14 and 15 But when the proper time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born subject to the regulations of the law, to purchase the freedom of those who were subject to the law, that we might be adopted and have sonship conferred upon us, and be recognized as God's sons. And because you really are his sons, God has sent the Holy Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father, Father.

Galatians, chapter 4, verses 4-6 in the Amplified Bible The Holy Spirit is the spirit of adoption. It is the coming of the Holy Spirit into the human spirit, which constitutes that spiritual new birth by which we may be born into the family of God and become his children. And it is the presence of the Holy Spirit within the human spirit which constitutes the seal God sets upon this new relationship.

In the relationship that existed between Mordecai and Esther, we have a beautiful picture of the relationship that exists between the Holy Spirit and those who, by faith, have received him. At the same time, it is necessary to remind you that the faith through which we receive the Holy Spirit is the very faith through which we claim redemption through the blood of Christ. Nor may the one be obtained without the other.

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us. For it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Galatians, chapter 3, verses 13-14 It is

when through faith you have claimed redemption, the forgiveness of your sins, through the blood of Christ shed vicariously for you, that God is able to send his Holy Spirit into your human spirit, and it is then that you begin to experience what John describes when he says, He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.

It is the witness of God which is greater than the witness of men. The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. Romans, chapter 8, verse 16 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ.

Our Saviour, Titus, chapter 3, verses 5 and 6 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace. Ephesians, chapter 1, verse 7 In whom ye also trusted after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also after that ye believed, he was sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. Ephesians, chapter 1, and verse 13 Have you claimed forgiveness from God through the death of Christ on your behalf? Do you know that you have received the Holy Spirit, in whose person the Lord Jesus has come to live within you, and who bears witness to your spirit that you have become a child of God? If not, would you do this now, before you read another page, and settle this issue forever? You will be so glad if you do.

The Holy Spirit grieves In chapter 3 we saw the Holy Spirit resisted. In chapter 2 the Holy Spirit receives. But in the opening verses of the fourth chapter, we have another picture.

It is of the Holy Spirit grieved. The spirit of adoption has become the spirit of sackcloth and ashes. For we read, when Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city and cried with a loud and bitter cry.

Chapter 4, verse 1 Esther herself was exceedingly grieved and bewildered by the situation, and did her best without success to comfort Mordecai. But he would not be comforted. She sent Raymond to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him.

But he received it not. Chapter 4, verse 4 The picture presented to us is crystal clear. For although Mordecai had come into the life of Esther, he had not yet gained access through the palace into the inner councils of the king.

There, Haman still wore the ring and dominated the scene. This is the carnal, or fleshly Christian. If you have received the Lord Jesus Christ as your Redeemer, then the Holy Spirit, as we have already seen, has come to take up residence within your human spirit, and you have been born again, and God has set a seal upon you as His child.

But if that old Adamic nature, the flesh, still dominates your soul and monopolizes your personality by colouring your thinking, sparking your ambitions, capturing your affections, and subtly persuading your will into submission to its claims upon you, then you too are a carnal Christian. You are what Paul describes as a babe in Christ, and the Holy Spirit will be green. He will become the spirit of sackcloth and ashes.

However, brethren, I could not talk to you as spiritual men, but as to non-spiritual men of the flesh, in whom the carnal nature predominates, as to mere infants in the new life in Christ, unable to talk yet. For you are still unspiritual, having the nature of the flesh under the control of ordinary impulses, for as long as there are envy and jealousy and wrangling and factions among you, are you not unspiritual and of the

flesh, behaving yourselves after a human standard and like mere unchanged men? 1 Corinthians 3, verses 1 and 3, in the Amplified Bible If the Holy Spirit is grieved within you, then you will not comfort him by a change of reigns, but only by a change of governance. He will never be comforted until the ring is on his feet and Haman on the gallows.

Esther did not understand her own case, because as yet she did not know the character of Haman. You may be sure that on such occasions as those upon which he may have encountered the queen, Haman was as sly as they come, dripping with charm, for the flesh is well-tutored in the art of being disarmingly wimpy, as well as being brutally sadistic, degrading and cruel. It was not his circumstances that bothered Mordecai, but the situation in the palace.

For as long as the ring remained upon the wrong finger, there could only be disaster in the land, and a change of reigns would not put that right. I wonder if you have been bewildered at this point in your Christian experience. You know you are converted, but beneath the outward practice and profession of your faith, you are conscious of the inner nagging of a troubled spirit.

True inner peace eludes you, and you sigh for release. Perhaps, like many another, you have said to yourself, I need a new church home. I do not think I fit into this community, but given a different spiritual environment, I am sure I would make good.

Soon, you are on the road again, for this is not the first time this has happened. You will not make good. You will simply create as much trouble in the next church as you made in the last, for there is nothing wrong with your spiritual environment, but there is something desperately wrong with you.

Fail to get that right, and you will be a spiritual tramp all the days of your life. Preacher, you may say to yourself, I need a new pastorate. I cannot get through to these people.

They are so hopelessly unresponsive, and I am wasting my gifts. No, preacher. Flame the pulpit, not the fuel, and examine your own heart before you inflict yourself upon another weary congregation.

Perhaps you are a student at Bible college or seminary, and you said to yourself, I know that my spiritual life is at a pretty low end, and that I am defeated in many areas of temptation, but I have been too busy with my exams to nourish my personal relationship to Jesus Christ. After all, student days only come once in a lifetime. I must admit I am not as concerned as I used to be about the lost, but of course, when I get to the mission field, that will all be different.

It will not be different. You will be a dead loss there as you are a dead loss now, for a change of geographical location will no more put the matter right than a change of pastorate or spiritual environment. As long as Haman is still strutting around in the palace and wearing the king's ring, you may get on board ship and sail to some far distant land, but wearing a topee and a khaki shirt, carving your way through the jungle with a Bible tucked under your arm, will not make you into a spiritual giant.

If the spirit of adoption has become the spirit of sackcloth and ashes, then you may have got the right man in, but you have not yet got the wrong man out. The ring is still on the wrong finger. If that persists, the noose may soon be around the wrong neck, and somehow that has got to be put right.

It will take more than a change of raiment to do that. You need a new prime minister. Esther, being unsuccessful in her attempts to comfort Mordecai by her own devices, decided that the only sensible thing to do would be to allow Mordecai to explain the situation to her for himself, and give her his instructions.

To this end, she called for Haytack, one of the king's chambers whom he had appointed to attend upon her, and gave him a commandment to Mordecai to know what it was and why it was. Chapter Four, Verse Five Mordecai responded immediately to her request, as the Holy Spirit responds at once to you and to me the moment we are prepared to set aside our own preconceived notions and allow Him to speak to us as the One whose office it is to convict us of our sins and to lead us into all truth. And Mordecai told him of all that had happened under him, and of the sum of the money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasurers for the Jews to destroy them.

Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them, to show it unto Esther. Chapter Four, Verses Seven and Eight Before Haman could be brought to the gala, Mordecai knew that it would be necessary first to convince Esther the queen of the wickedness of this sinister character and of the murderous intent that lay beneath his charming manner. It is just at this point, too, that true spiritual conviction begins.

It is an activity of the Holy Spirit within the human spirit before its fullest impact is made upon the soul. It is perhaps difficult to locate the feet of human conscience, but it is important for us to recognize the fact that in addition to the moral conscience, there is an animal conscience, and it is easy for us to mistake the one for the other. The conscience of convenience.

The conscience of convenience acts upon the basis of what is consequentially right or wrong, as opposed to what is morally right or wrong, and it is located within the soul. It is the animal conscience. Maybe you can remember the first time you had a puppy in the home, the sweet, fluffy little thing.

You had not had the puppy in the home for long, however, before you discovered that it needed to develop a conscience about certain matters. Can you imagine slipping out to do some shopping some morning, just before lunch, leaving a nice, juicy piece of steak upon the kitchen table? Needless to say, in your absence, the puppy begins to make a reconnaissance, and climbing onto the kitchen table by easy stages hides the piece of steak with obvious admiration. Now, just put yourself in the puppy's position.

If you were a hungry puppy and found yourself within chewing distance of a piece of steak, quite frankly, what would you do? Of course, the answer is a foregone conclusion. You would wrap yourself around it. That is exactly what the puppy does, and when you return sometime later, you find the steak inside the dog, the sweet, fluffy little thing.

Perhaps the first time it happens, after your first flush of indignation, you tend to take a charitable view of the matter, and somewhat amusingly recount the story to your friends. Not indeed that you exempt the puppy altogether from a timely smack, and a deep-voiced, BAD DOG! BAD DOG! Mind you, to be quite honest, the puppy remains baffled at the exercise, quietly thinking to himself, what extraordinary people these human beings are. Whatever can be wrong about a hungry dog eating juicy steak? When on some future occasion, and for the second time the puppy consumes your lunch, somehow the sweet, fluffy little thing is neither quite so sweet, nor quite so fluffy, do you thrash that dog? Slowly, but without any moral enlightenment, the puppy gets the point.

And when on yet another occasion the dog is left exposed by your carelessness to similar temptations, it restrains its appetite, and gazing at the tempting morsel, with saliva dribbling down its cheeks, it says to itself, I really do not see why I should not eat it. But the last time I did so, that woman really got mad at me. The first time was not so bad, but the second time it really hurt.

When she thrashed me, it does not make sense to me, but maybe I had better wait till she gets back. The dog now has a conscience about stealing. Not, of course, that it has any moral value, whatever, but it has learned that in life there are certain things that are smack wrong, and therefore better to be avoided for the consequences they incur.

Smack wrong. In the meantime, you may be teaching the dog to beg, and the thoughts that it has about you in the process would probably be less than flattering. I can't think of anything more stupid than expecting me to sit on my hind legs and stick my paws out in the air.

I'm just not made that way. I'm not that shape. However, when the dog discovers that every earnest attempt receives its due reward, it learns that there are not only things in life that are smack wrong, but there are things in life that can be right.

Not right because they are right, but simply right because they get rewards. Can be right. You may be shocked at the suggestion, but this is the primary stage in the education of a baby.

You do not moralize in flowery language when it grabs the tablecloth and pulls the best china onto the floor. You teach it the hard way that this is one of the things in life which is smack wrong. And when it has swallowed the last mouthful of spinach and gets a piece of chocolate, it knows that this is one of the things in life which is can be right.

If you still fail to grasp what I'm getting at, then ask yourself next time you are driving too fast in a speed-restricted area why it is you look so often and so anxiously in the mirror. It is probably because you are less morally concerned about the speed limit than you are consequentially concerned about the speed car. It is smack wrong.

On this basis, a thing may be socially right or socially wrong, ecclesiastically right or ecclesiastically wrong, financially right or financially wrong, or, for that matter, evangelically right or evangelically wrong, without any real moral issue being involved on the part of the individual. He is simply trimming his behavior on the one hand to avoid the smack and on the other hand to get the candy. I am convinced that there are tens of thousands of young people who profess to be Christians but whose conduct within the evangelical context conforms to certain prescribed patterns that make them acceptable within the society to which they adhere, not because they have any deep spiritual conviction in the matter, but simply because they have been evangelically house-drawn.

Send them off to a secular university, draft them into the armed forces, or, in some other way, detach them from the evangelical mold to which they have been conformed, and the results are inevitably disastrous, because, confronted with the cold facts of life in a world of other standards, they discover that they never had any real conscience about anything. They simply did what their counselor told them to do. The Conscience of Conviction If the Conscience of Convenience determines only what is consequentially right and what is consequentially wrong, then the Conscience of Conviction determines what is morally right and what is morally wrong.

In other words, what is right because it is right, and what is wrong because it is wrong, and for no other reason. The Conscience of Convenience is comparative, and will be subject to every changing wind of fashion, and will readily subscribe to the new morality which makes immorality acceptable to society. On the other hand, the Conscience of Conviction is absolute, as absolute as God Himself.

It may well be that within the human spirit of the unregenerate soul there remains a vestigial image of the righteousness and glory of God in whose image man was created. It may be this which gives to the unregenerate, and even to the most degenerate, that strange inner sense of right and wrong, which is so much nobler than that which derives only from the smack wrong, can be right, the Conscience of Convenience. Even so, it is unreliable.

It may be seared, distorted, colored and twisted by tradition, culture and circumstance, and in itself does not speak with that final authority that makes it impossible for a man to rationalize in such a way that wrong becomes right, and right becomes wrong. The first thing that the Holy Spirit does when He comes to take up residence within the spirit of a man is to establish again those absolute standards of righteousness within the moral conscience which reflect the very nature and character of God Himself. This takes place even though such restored standards do not at once become articulate, as it were, within the soul.

The regenerate sinner himself is not at first able to define this new principle of life, and all that he can say when challenged as to why he no longer does the things he did or say the things he said is this, I do not know, I cannot explain it, but somehow deep down inside me I know now that to do and say these things is wrong. This is why the deepest work of repentance within a man's life is brought about by the Holy Spirit's subsequence to conversion, rather than prior to or at conversion. It is true, of course, that there can be no genuine faith in Christ without some measure of repentance, but such initial repentance tends to stem more from the fear of the consequences of sin than from sorrow for the sinfulness of sin.

When the Holy Spirit begins to reveal to your human spirit the naked wickedness of the flesh, as Mordecai revealed to Esther the naked wickedness of Haman, such distressing conviction may result that you begin to wonder whether you were ever really saved. This is a healthy symptom, and one of the surest evidences of a genuine spiritual rebirth. The Holy Spirit is like a man with a lamp entering a dark and dirty room, and what you have learned to live with in the dark becomes repugnant in the light.

In this way, you come to realize the nature of your case, and that you need a deeper work of grace than simply that which gets you out of hell and into heaven. You will begin to cry out with the slowness of all, out of the bitterness of self-discovery. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Behold, thou desirest truth in the end with pious. Hide thy face from my sin, and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Mark 51, verses 5, 6, and 9 to 11 Esther had to discover the kind of company she had been keeping in the past. And it wasn't a pleasant discovery.

It is always an ugly experience when the Holy Spirit first introduces you to your own hyman, and rips the mask off his evil face. You feel you want to flee with Peter, and weep bitterly. End of chapter 5 Shocked, and not a little frightened to discover that the affairs of the kingdom had been placed in such wicked hands, Esther was no less alarmed at Mordecai's explicit instructions, now that the enemy had been exposed.

Hathab had been sent by Mordecai not only to show to Esther the copy of the writing of the decree that was given at Shushan to destroy the Jews, but also to charge her that she should go in unto the king to

make supplication unto him, and to make requests before him for her people. Chapter 4, verse 18 The queen knew full well, however, that to enter unsummoned into the presence of the king was to pass sentence of death upon herself, for such was the law of the land. It was not simply that those who crossed the threshold into the royal presence without being caught would be put on trial and judged.

Sentence was automatic. The moment Esther's foot crossed the forbidden line, she knew that she would be as good as dead, save in the unlikely event that the king should hold out to her the golden scepter. It was little wonder, then, that Mordecai's instructions came as a shock to the queen, and that her natural reaction was to recoil and protest.

Thus it was that she sent her reply. Again Esther spake unto Hathab and gave him commandment unto Mordecai, All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces do know that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden scepter that he may live. But I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days.

Chapter 4, verses 10 and 11 A fierce conflict now raged within the heart of Esther as she argued within herself. From chapter 2, verse 20, we understand that Esther had not yet showed her kindred nor her people, as Mordecai had charged her. But now she was to come out into the open and identify herself with God's people, God's purpose, and God's power.

And in doing so, she would at once expose herself to Haman's hatred of the Jews. Under these circumstances, it seemed to be altogether unreasonable to sentence herself to death by seeking so recklessly an audience with the king. If Haman is as wicked and cunning as Mordecai makes him out to be, then at all costs I must survive, for I am indispensable to my people.

Maybe I can outwit him, beat him at his own game and thwart his ugly plans. Or maybe there is a better side to his character that needs to be encouraged. Perhaps, after all, there is some good in him that Mordecai has overlooked.

But to die? Self-sentence? No! There must be some more reasonable alternative to death. Resisted, received, and grieved. The picture now is of the Holy Spirit quenched.

For until Esther was prepared to die to her own ability to bring Haman to the place of death, Mordecai would be unable to put him on the gallows. The lesson to be learned was as hard for Esther then as it is for us today. It was not to be her responsibility to hang Haman, for that belonged to Mordecai.

It was to be her responsibility to do as she was told, simply to obey instructions, even though death itself might seem to be the only possible consequence. As Esther had to die to her own ability to hang Haman, so you too must die to your own ability to deal with the flesh, for you cannot crucify yourself. That is God's business.

To walk in the Spirit is to have such utter confidence in Him that you first seek His instructions, then ask no further questions, but just do as you are told. For all such, the promise of God is that they will not walk in the lusts of the flesh. The Holy Spirit is fully able to deal with the flesh, and to put it and to keep it in the place of death.

It is His business to hang Haman. And they told Mordecai Esther's words. Then Mordecai commanded the one to Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house more than all the Jews.

For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall their enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place. But thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed. And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this? Mordecai made it abundantly clear to Esther that she was not indispensable to God, but that God was essentially indispensable to her.

He made it equally clear to her that a moment had come in her life which would be fraught with tremendous consequence. It would be decisive, one way or the other. Mordecai said to Esther in so many words, You stand upon the threshold of that destiny for which you have been chosen and prepared.

And if you choose right, then this can be your greatest hour. On the other hand, if you choose wrong, throw it all back into God's face and hold your peace to save your own skin. Then do not flatter yourself that you will escape the consequence.

For in seeking to preserve your own life, you will lose it. If you are prepared to lose your life for God's sake, you will find it. This is your hour of destiny.

Choose wisely. Do not throw it all away. I believe that such a moment comes in the life of every child of God.

The moment when God's purpose for your life hangs delicately in the balance. It may be that at this very moment, these words find you too poised upon the threshold of that for which Christ redeems you and for which his presence is waiting to empower you. And at one and the same time, you are both frightened and excited at the prospect Fulfillment comes with the realization that you do not have in yourself what it takes.

Death to all that you are in your own inadequacy is the only gateway through which you may enter into the fullness of all that Christ is so that you may live miraculously in the power of his resurrection. Crying from the heart, Lord Jesus, I can't, but you can. And that is all I need to know.

Let's go. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

Matthew, chapter 16, verses 24 and 25 The Holy Spirit obeyed. With the issue so clearly defined, the response which Esther gave was both crisp and courageous, and the picture that it presents of true discipleship is thrilling and dramatic. Then Esther bade them return, Mordecai, this answer.

Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast in ye for me. And neither eat nor drink three days, night or day. I also and my maidens will fast likewise.

And so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law. And if I perish, I perish. Chapter 4, verses 15 and 16 Esther the queen did not give away her beautiful dress, nor renounce the luxury of the royal court.

She neither relinquished her crown nor dismissed her servants. She did not need to. The die was cast, and the decision had been made.

The issue she faced was final and embraced all other issues. Esther now was alive to God alone, and dead to self and all self-interest. Three days and three nights Esther was already buried.

Resolved to die, she had forsaken all, as good as dead. As well she knew, only the golden scepter could raise her from the dead on that third morning, as she entered uninvited into the presence of the king. What a wealth of significance there is to be found in this amazing picture.

Three days and three nights, the third morning. Does this remind you of anything? It was on the third morning that Joshua, taking his people into the place of death in the depths of Jordan, was preserved miraculously with the whole of Israel by God's divine intervention, and brought through on dry ground into the land of promise. The people were raised from the dead on that third morning to enter into all the goods of that for which they had been redeemed, out of Egypt.

Three days and three nights, Joshua was on the belly of the whale, thrown overboard at his own request, dying to his own self-will and disobedience. Buried with the weeds of his own waywardness, wrapped about his head, only to be raised again, alive from the dead on the third morning, brought up on the seashore to be recommissioned for the task, and to save a people from perishing. It was on the third morning that Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place of Pharaoh, in Genesis chapter 22 and verse 4, the place where a knife was to be plunged into the heart of Isaac, his only son.

Isaac, in whom was comprehended for Abraham all the promises of God, all his noblest aspirations, life itself. And as the knife flashed in the sunlight on that third morning, God provided the ram in the thicket as a substitute, and raised Isaac in a figure from the dead. Hebrews chapter 11 verses 18 and 19 Willingness to die is the price that you must pay if you want to be raised from the dead, and live and work and walk in the power of the third morning, sharing the resurrection life of Jesus Christ on earth.

In this, you are identified with Him in the relentless unfolding of God's redemptive purpose, which are to find their final consummation in the glorious appearing of our triumphant risen Lord. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth, for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory. Colossians chapter 3 verses 1 to 4 Lips quivering, every limb trembling, and with a heart thumping fit to burst. It was a pale-faced slip of a girl who stepped out on that third morning as she crossed the threshold of the royal court into the presence of the king.

Uninvited, she had nothing to lose, for she was already dead, self-sentenced. But she had everything to gain. Compelled as though by some unseen inner thrust, Esther threw her life away.

Others gasped as they saw her go, for to them it was an act of reckless folly. But in her heart a little voice kept saying, God take the consequences. And He did.

Now again, in chapter 5 verses 1 and 2 Now it came to pass on the third day that Esther put on her royal apparel and stood in the inner court of the king's house. And the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house. And it was so when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court that she obtained favor in his sight.

And the king held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. So Esther drew near and touched the top of the scepter. God had raised her from the dead.

Dead to herself and alive to God. All responsibility now rested fairly and squarely upon the shoulders of Mordecai. Esther knew the emancipation of obedience.

There were no more issues for her to face. Only instruction to obey.

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