

# Esther 5

by William MacDonald

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*God works behind the scenes, shaping events and bringing his people out to their desired end, and he rewards faithfulness with eternal glory.*

**Duration:** 49:27

**Scripture:** Esther 2:13, Esther 4:14, Proverbs 3:5-6, Isaiah 33:17, Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 6:10, Hebrews 11:6

**Topics:** "Esther"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the book of Esther and highlights the hand of God in shaping the events of history for the benefit of His people. The speaker emphasizes that the Christian life is full of unexpected and significant moments, and encourages listeners to persevere and not give up. The sermon also mentions the importance of family values and the impact of small acts of kindness done in the name of Jesus. The speaker concludes by reminding listeners that God rewards their service, even if they may not see the immediate results.

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## Transcript

So the king and Haman went to dine with Queen Esther, and on the second day at the banquet of wine, the king again said to Esther, What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you, and what is your request? Up to half my kingdom it shall be done. Then Queen Esther answered and said, If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me at my petition and my people at my request. For we have been sold, my people and I, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated.

Had we been sold as male and female slaves, I would have held my tongue, although the enemy could never compensate for the king's loss. Then King Ahasuerus answered and said to Queen Esther, Who is he, and where is he who would dare presume in his heart to do such a thing? And Esther said, The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman. So Haman was terrified before the king and queen.

Then the king arose in his wrath from the banquet of wine and went into the palace garden. But Haman stood before Queen Esther, pleading for his life, for he saw that evil was determined against him by the king. When the king returned from the palace garden to the place of the banquet of wine, Haman had fallen across the couch where Esther was.

Then the king said, Will he also assault the queen while I am in the house? As the word left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. Now Harbonah, one of the eunuchs, said to the king, Look, the gallows fifty cubits high which Haman made for Mordecai, who spoke good things on the king's behalf, is standing at the house of Haman. And the king said, Hang him on it.

So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king's wrath subsided. For the last two nights we've been tracing the hand of God in Providence, shaping the events of history and shaping them in behalf of his people in a very special way.

It's been thrilling to see God working behind the scenes, although his face was hidden. He was working behind the scenes and bringing his people out to their desired end. Now tonight I'd just like to start at the beginning of the book again and just draw out some spiritual lessons.

First let me say that Waldworth comments that this book has all the marks of great literature. In addition to being the inspired word of God, it has all the marks of great literature. Conflict, antagonism, irony, tension, and it's wonderful how they're all woven together.

And J. G. Bellet speaks of the wonderful interweaving of circumstances which we get in this history. There's plot and under plot, wheels within wheels, circumstances hanging upon circumstances, all formed together to work out the wonderful plans of God. Well spoken, Mr. Bellet.

The book begins in rather a prosaic way. Now it came to pass. Now it came to pass.

You know, the day started like a lot of other days, and there was no intimation when the day started of the momentous events that were going to occur in the days that followed. To me, that's one of the thrilling things about the Christian life. You don't know on any particular day the tremendous things that are going to take place as a result of something on that day.

You've come to this conference. There's no way of measuring the results of a conference like this. Maybe you've come seeking the guidance of God, and some chance remark by some fellow missionary has rung a bell in your mind.

You never know. God is able to do that. Some of you have come saddened and perplexed, and some verse of Scripture might have come home to you in power.

Some have been seeking the direction of God in their lives, perhaps, and God has been working. It's really exciting to me to think of that in connection with the Christian life. You just never know when the dawn comes, the wonderful things that God has prepared, or that might even just begin at a time like that, the auspicious events that might be involved.

This tremendous potential in every day for God, isn't there? Now, Esther and Mordecai that day, what would you say? They were nobody's, you know? I mean, they certainly weren't heroes and heroines, were they that day? He was just an obscure Jewish maiden, and he was out there in the court of the king's palace. Well, you might think yourself to be a nobody, and you might think your life to be very mundane, and probably Mordecai and Esther did. But what do you think they think in retrospect? When they look back over the history, it's a different story.

Francis Schaeffer says there are no nobodies with God. That's true. Every one of God's people is important.

Gray, in his elegy written in the country churchyard, speaks those sad lines, full many a flower is born to bloom unseen and waste its fragrance on the desert air. But that isn't true with God's people. That isn't with God's people.

There's no wasted fragrance as far as he is concerned. Then, of course, we have this feast that he threw, tremendous feast, and the way he treated his wife. How should a man treat his wife? Is this the way a man should treat his wife? Well, I'll tell you, he should treat his wife like a lady.

I think most wives want that more than almost anything else. They want to be treated like a lady. I often think of that pastor of the Scotts Memorial Church in San Diego.

One Sunday morning, he drove up to the front of the church, you know, and the people were all milling there and moving into the church building itself, and he pulled up into his parking space there at the front of the church, and he jumped out of the car, and he ran into the church. I mean, he was thinking of the message and of the souls that were at stake, and he was preoccupied. So his wife just sat in the car, and after a while, he tumbled.

He realized what was happening, and he went out, and all the people looking, he opened the door for his wife to get out. That night, at the end of a tremendously busy day, they drove home, and they didn't have an electric garage door opener, an automatic opener. He drove into the driveway, and she jumped out and opened the door for him, but there was nobody looking.

It made a difference, didn't it? She was glad to do this. She knew he was tired there at the end of the day, and she was glad to take that place of a servant for him. Men should treat their wives like a lady.

The best thing we saw had to suffer for righteousness' sake, and she wasn't the last woman who had to do this either, and it makes us think of the words of Peter, for this is commendable if because of conscience toward God, one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it when you're beaten for your faults if you take it patiently, but when you do good and suffer for it, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. And we saw how that in the purposes of God, Vashti had to go in order that Esther might be on the throne, but even so, I think Vashti's name is memorialized in this book because of what she did and in a favorable way.

And God overruled the wickedness of Ahasuerus to bring it all about. A man plans his ways, but the Lord directs his steps. I'm fascinated in chapter 2 by the ceremonial purification process.

It talks about ointments, and it talks about spices, and it talks about cosmetics and apparel and adornments and jewels. And of course it's easy for us to make applications. We think right away of 1 Timothy 2, verses 9 and 10, applying to the sisters and like men are also that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but which is proper for women professing godliness with good work.

Or 1 Peter 3, 3 and 4, do not let your beauty be that outward adorning or arranging the hair or wearing gold or putting on fine apparel, but let it be the hidden person of the heart with the incorruptible ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. But I'd like to suggest that it has an application for more than the sisters has for the men as well. Why? Because lifetime is training time for reigning time, and God is seeking to prepare us all for that day when we'll enter the palace of the king and see him in his beauty.

I remember some years ago, Queen Elizabeth was going to cross the Atlantic. She was much younger, and she was going to fly across the Atlantic. And there was an article describing the course of training that the flight attendants had to go through.

They had to be schooled in behavior before the queen. They had to be schooled in protocol. They had to be schooled in courtesy.

And really, it was a very elaborate training program just to fly across the Atlantic with the queen of Great Britain. But dear friends, we have something much greater than that in prospect, don't we? Haggai's charm school reminds us that God is preparing us in a beauty school. God is seeking to conform us all to the likeness of his son.

He wants to remove all the warts and moles and spiritual pimples and wrinkles, doesn't he? Spiritual pimples and wrinkles. And it's really marvelous when you stop to think of it. At the end of the training course, when we stand before the Lord Jesus, it says Paul, writing to the Ephesians, will be without spots or wrinkles or any such thing.

And I want to tell you that's a marvel of grace. Nothing short of a marvel of grace that we should ever be like that. But you know, it's more glory for God if we become like that now.

It's going to be automatic when we see his face. As soon as we see his face, we'll be transformed into his image. I say it's more glory for the Lord as the process is taking place now.

And that's rather convicting to me, because I find it very easy to be satisfied with where I am spiritually. You know, it's funny, isn't it? I spoke to the mother, an unsaved mother of one of our missionaries in Brazil recently, and she said, she works with the computers, and she said, every day I try to learn a new command on my computer. Very good.

She said, Germanly, every day I try to learn a new command on my computer. And I thought, boy, there's a spiritual lesson for me in that. And I exercise before the Lord every day about some aspect of my character that needs to be changed.

Satisfaction is the grave of progress, isn't it? And if I'm satisfied with where I am spiritually, I'm not going to make any progress. And God wants me to be moving forward for him. And becoming more like the Lord Jesus.

I think I told many of you, we had an intern a few years ago, dear Rob Luce, and he contracted melanoma, and it was to be fatal, obviously, in his case. And Rob Luce is a very Christ-like fellow. He hadn't been saved very long, but he had memorized 2,000 verses of Scripture.

And you know, it's marvelous that the verses of Scripture he memorized were just the verses he needed for this trial in his life. And I'll never forget how one day a visiting nurse came to the house, and she said to Rob's wife, Donna, Rob makes me think of Jesus. And she wasn't a believer.

She said, Rob makes me think of Jesus, and the interns that come make me think of the Twelve Disciples. Well, isn't that wonderful? Here's a fellow, you know, terminal with cancer, and he was glorifying the Lord through it all. And here an unsaved woman comes into the house, and she detects the fragrance of Christ there.

I think that's wonderful. And we're all in the school of God, and it requires our exercise, too, that we might become more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ. I say the danger is that we become satisfied with our spiritual progress, and as long as we are, we will not be moving forward for the Lord.

Notice verse 13 of chapter 2. It says, Thus prepared, each young woman went to the king, and she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the women's quarters to the king's palace. Every young woman was given whatever she desired to take to the king's palace. That raises a question in my mind.

What would you like to take to the king's palace? We're going. Your eyes will see the king in his beauty. They'll see a land that's very far off.

What would I like to take to the king's palace? A good question, isn't it? And I can't answer it for you. Of course, I can't help thinking of the poem supposedly expressing the words of Samuel Rutherford. He lived in a town called Anwerth by the Solway River, and Anne Cousins puts these words in his mouth in the poem.

Fare Anwerth by the Solway, to me your ever dear. E'en from the gates of heaven I drop for thee a tear. Oh, if one soul from Anwerth meet me at God's right hand, my heaven will be two heavens in Emmanuel's land.

He wanted to take souls with him to heaven, a noble aspiration. I leave the question with you tonight. What would you like to take to the king's palace? And be careful, because what you want is what you'll get.

We determine that in this life. Then, of course, we had the wonderful story of how Esther was chosen to be queen against all normal considerations. In some ways, she was the most unlikely to be chosen queen, but God is able to take the most unlikely and work out his purposes.

What a Cinderella story, huh? What a Cinderella story. It's nothing like yours and mine. It's nothing like yours and mine, from the rags of sin to the riches in Christ Jesus.

There's nothing more wonderful than that. Sometimes we don't realize just how wonderful it is. We think back to what we were under the condemnation of the law.

Worthless, really, in many respects. And yet he lifts us from the dungheap and he sets our feet upon the rock and establishes our way and puts a song in our mouth to glorify our God and destines us to eternal glory. So when I think of dear Esther, I think, well, I've got something better than you, Esther.

You were queen for a short time, and we're going to be heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ for all eternity. And I think it's wonderful in this story that she became queen long before her people needed help. She had no idea when she became queen, the tremendous position that she was going to play in the years ahead.

Isn't God wonderful? Right now he's working in your life and he's working in my life. We don't know. We can't see ahead.

He doesn't show us the blueprint, but he's working all things out for his glory and for our good. We noticed how Mordecai heard this plot against the king, and it was just filed away in the files. No fuss.

Never made the front page of the paper at all, probably. The Shushan Gazette. Seems a bit unfair, doesn't it? He certainly wasn't rewarded immediately, but we saw last night that was a good thing he wasn't.

It was a very good thing he wasn't rewarded immediately. And we mentioned that God keeps good records and he's going to reward everything. I like those words.

God is not unjust to forget. That's beautiful, isn't it? That's not the whole verse. God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which you have shown to his name and that you ministered unto the saints and do minister.

But just take those first words. God is not unrighteous or unjust to forget. He isn't either.

He knew what had been done. It was written down in his records and he knows all that you have done too. Every slightest bit of service for him is all recorded.

It's all going to be rewarded in a coming day. That glass of cold water given in his name, just think of it. We don't think much of a glass of water, do we? Given in his name, that makes all the difference and it will receive its reward.

Heaven is the best and safest place to learn the results of our labor. Heaven is the best and safest place to learn the results of our labor. I like this assurance your heavenly father who sees in secret will himself reward you openly.

That's delightful, that word himself there. Your heavenly father who sees in secret will himself reward you openly. God knows that it's good for us not to know all that has been accomplished by our service, probably give us the big hit if we did.

And so he just waits it. He just waits for a better time. When you read the book, things seem to be moving awfully quickly, but they don't move quickly.

Actually, there are years, sometimes five years between some these chapters. That's hard, friends. If you find waiting as hard as I do, that's tough.

It makes me think of Amy Carmichael's poem, and I think of this poem really all the time. She said, thou art the Lord who slept upon the pillow. Thou art the Lord who soothed the furious sea.

What matter beating wind and tossing billow if only we are in the ship with thee? And then she says, keep us in quiet through the age-long minute. Have you ever had an age-long minute in your life? I have. Between the time when the doctor says yes, it's going to require surgery.

But the date will be an age-long minute. Keep us in quiet through the age-long minute when the waves are high and the wind is shrill. Can the boat sink when thou, dear Lord, art in it? Can the heart sink that waiteth on thy will? And Esther had to know something of that age-long minute, and she had to be kept in quiet by the grace and mercy of the Lord himself.

And he was there, and he was doing it for her. Of course, all the time now, Satan has acted behind the scenes just as he is today, and I think we see it increasingly. We see his rage against the things of God more than we've seen in the past.

Mordecai refuses to bow to Haman. It wasn't just courtesy, it wasn't just obedience to the king, it was because he was a Hebrew, and he worshipped the one and true God. And his fear of God overcame the fear of men.

I think we've said before, it really takes courage to stand against the tide, doesn't it? And he had it. And as far as the record is concerned, he's the only one who was willing to take that stand. Faithfulness to the Lord and to the word of God.

And, you know, sometimes I think that this is a characteristic that's fast dribbling away from the Christian community. Willingness to stand for what's right. When I was a boy, there was a girl in our Sunday school, and in the public school, the teacher assigned all the boys and girls that they were to memorize the poem *Invictus* by William Henley.

It's an atheist poem, it's humanism to the core. And they were to come to school and recite it. I'll read the poem to you so you'll know why this girl went to the teacher and said she couldn't do it.

Henley wrote out of the night that covers me black as the pit from pole to pole. I think whatever God's may be for my unconquerable soul. In the fell clutch of circumstance, I have not winced nor cried aloud under the bloody under the bludgeoning of chance.

My head is bloody, but unbound beyond this place of wrath and tears looms but the horror of the shade. And yet the menace of years finds and shall find me unafraid. It matters not how straight the gate, how charged with punishment the scroll.

I am the master of my fate. I am the conqueror of my soul. And this dear girl prompted at home, went to the teacher.

She said, I can't recite that. She refused to do it. It was in the papers.

It was almost as if she was a Jehovah's Witness refusing to salute the flag or something like that. You know, she wouldn't do it. I tell you, it takes courage for a kid in public school in elementary school, doesn't it? Take a stand like that.

God has. Can God get around a situation like that? Well, he can't. Somebody came to her and said, you know, Edith, there's a Christian version of that poem.

It's written by a lady named Dorothy Day. Why don't you go and ask the teacher if you can say the Christian version of the poem? And so Edith did. She went back to the public school and she told the teacher about this.

And the teacher, strangely enough, gave her permission. And Edith got up and recited this poem called *My Captain*. Out of the light that dazzles me bright as the sun from pole to pole, I thank the God I know to be for Christ, the conqueror of my soul.

Since his the sway of circumstance, I would not wince nor cry aloud under the rule which men call chance. My head with joy is humbly bowed beyond this place of sin and tears, that life with him and his the aid that, despite the menace of the years, keeps and shall keep me unafraid. I have no fear, though straight the gate he cleared from punishment this world.

Christ is the master of my fate. Christ is the conqueror of my soul. But I want to tell you, it was a great victory for Jesus.

That girl had backbone. She was no jellyfish. And God honored her.

I often think of dear Eric Little, 1924 Olympics, Scottish lad who loved the Lord and who loved his day to the Lord's Day. And you know how his race came up on the Lord's Day on Sunday. He said, I'm sorry, I can't run on that day.

His attitude was, if you love the Lord, you love his day too. And of course, you many of you know the pressures that were brought up. You're being disloyal to the empire.

We're depending on you in this race. And he stood by his guns. He was a man of conviction, stood by his guns, and he refused to run.

Well, finally, they made a compromise and they allowed him to run on a weekday in a race that he really hadn't particularly trained for. It wasn't his meter. And people who, oh, just as he was about to run, somebody came and put a slip of paper in his hand, just as a race, they were just about to start.

And he put a slip of paper in his hand, looked down and said, them that honor me, I will honor. And he ran in that race. And the people who observed it said it was the worst possible performance that could be made.

His hands were flailing around like a windmill, you know, and his form just wasn't good at all. It broke the world's record, broke the world's record. How do you explain that? God honored him.

And later he was, he died actually in concentration camp under the Japanese. But he was still the same Eric, still the same Eric, a man of conviction and yet a man of tremendous love showing Christ. They said that a lot of the business men that were there in the concentration camp and even some of the missionaries, there was conflict and strife and all the rest, but Eric was still the same.

Tearing up the sheet of his bed to wind it around a supposed hockey stick so that the kids could play hockey, that type of thing. Wonderful. If you read Our Daily Bread, you read an interesting thing recently.

Joe E. Brown was a top notch movie and Broadway comedian of the World War II era. And when he was entertaining some troops out in the South Pacific, he was asked by a soldier to tell some dirty jokes. That wasn't uncommon.

I tell you, during the Second World War, he responded, son, a comedian like me lives for applause and laughter, but if telling a dirty story is the price I must pay for your laughter, then I'm not interested. Good, isn't it? I've never done an act that I couldn't perform before my mother, and I never will. The soldiers rocked the jungles with tears, with cheers.

They just broke out in applause to Joe E. Brown. Thank God for men and women of conviction. Mordecai gave us a picture of it here in the Book of Esther, and down through the centuries, we've had other pictures as well.

Martin Luther. That's wonderful, wasn't it? He said, the word of God is not my word. I, therefore, cannot abandon it, but in all things short of that, I'm glad to be docile and obedient.

You shall have my blood, my life, rather than a single word of retraction, for it's better to obey God than man. It's no fault of mine that this matter causes confusion among you. Here I stand.

I can do no other. God help me. Amen.

He got a swam along with the tide. He wasn't willing to do it. My mother brought me up on the tales of the Covenanters, men in Scotland years ago who stood by the word of God and refused to compromise or retract.

The temper of the people is shown by the reply of a minister, John Ross, who was summoned before the king for preaching a sermon in which he said that the king was a traitor to God for taking the part of the wicked. The king asked him, Will you stand and bide by all you have spoken? And Ross replied, The heart thought it. The mouth spoke it.

The hand subscribed it. And if need be, by God's grace, the blood will seal it. We had a calendar.

I can still see it in the pantry door of our kitchen there. There was a picture of one of the Covenanters who had been and actually his name was John Brown, and he was fleeing from Lord Claverhouse, living out in the dens and caves of the woods. But he had to come home every once in a while for clothes and for food.

And one day when he came home, Claverhouse and his men were there. And Claverhouse ordered his men to kill John Brown. And I think when they looked at him, they thought they saw the face of an angel and they couldn't kill him.

But Claverhouse did. And then he turned to the widow and he said, What do you think of your husband now? And she said, I always thought a great deal of him, but I never thought more of him than I do now. And how the church of the Lord Jesus Christ needs that spirit today, needs it desperately.

We're more like a herd of plump cows living in comfortableness, with little conviction on many things that are of primary importance. In the days of Caesar, you know, the population was required to come and just take a pinch of incense and put it on the fire and say, Caesar is Lord. That's all you had to do.

You could put it on and then you could go and worship whatever God you wanted. All you had to do was just take that pinch of incense and put it on the fire and say, Caesar is Lord. Did you know what happened? How many Christians refused to say it.

They would say, Jesus is Lord. I think that's the best bumper sticker you can have. Jesus is Lord.

Men and women that were willing to give their lives for the truth. Now, I'd like to ask you a question. Where does the courage to stand true to convictions come from? Is it in the genes? Where do you think it comes from? I'd like to suggest it comes from a certain kind of a mother.

I think it's something that a mother breeds into her children. I really do with all my heart. Think about that for a minute.

Think about that godly mother teaching her children to stand true to the word of God, no matter what the consequences may be. Your responsibility is obedience. God will take care of the consequences.

It's an interesting thing on the secular book market now there's a book called A Book of Virtues by William Bennett. I'm not trying to sell it. William Bennett was a former Secretary of Education.

Has anyone here seen the book? A Book of Virtues? A few hands are up. Well, it's a very interesting book. This man is a Roman Catholic.

He's a man of character, William Bennett. I think when you see the book you think, he'd make a good president. And what he's done is he's collected from literature, articles, poems, quotations on various virtues that you'd like to inculcate into your children.

It'd be wonderful to have a book like that, purely Christian. He has a lot of Bible stories in it from Agamars. He has a lot of Bible stories in it.

Frankly, the bookstores out our way can't keep it can't keep it in stock. Costco, every time I go just for the fun of it, I go to see if it's there and it's gone. It's sold out.

They just cannot keep it in stock. And here are parents devouring this book and reading these things to their kids. But I looked through it and I saw many, many things that my mother had shared with us.

How Robert the Bruce was in a cave. He had lost six battles, you know. And he's in a cave and the cause seems doomed.

And all of a sudden he sees a spider there in the cave. And the spider is trying to make connection with its web, you know. And it falls.

It tries again. Falls. Tries six times and falls.

The seventh time he made it. And Robert the Bruce said, that's it. I failed six times, the next time I'll make it.

And he did. He went on to military victory. What was she saying to us? She was saying, don't give up.

Keep on going on. And she bred that into us. And this is what William Bennett is trying to do with this book.

To get back to these, shall we say, family values. I guess that's a good word for it. A sense of morality as well.

And as I say, many of the mothers out our way are just using the book and reading it. There are some things about mythology in it. And of course Esau's fables, some of them are in it as well.

But that's all right. You can use it selectively. Then we come on to where the lots were cast to determine the date of the massacre.

And by a seeming coincidence, the date was almost a year, nearly a year away. Even superstition was chained to the divine chariot wheels. And that should be an encouragement to everybody here serving the Lord.

God can chain anything to the accomplishment of his purposes. Then, of course, Wicked Haman's proposal to the king. The Jews were throughout the realm and they weren't just a local threat.

And he reasoned that if Mordecai refused to bow to him, all the Jews would refuse to bow to him as well. And he was probably right in that. He said they don't keep our laws.

He said they're different. They shouldn't be allowed to remain. And according to Ray Steadman, he was willing to contribute 275 tons of silver to bring it about.

It was 10,000 talents to the king's treasury, probably from the Jews' confiscated property. When Haman drew up that decree, he didn't know that he was masterminding the death of the queen. It's incredible, isn't it? Really incredible.

Whitcomb said this ignorance of one vital fact proved in God's providence and justice to be his undoing. And of course, you can't think of this without thinking of the whole subject of anti-Semitism. Isn't that right? Anti-Semitism.

Down through the years, people turning against the Jewish people. No, I don't think any group has ever suffered like the Jewish people have. Lord Jacob, let's see what his name was, Jacobowitz, he was the former chief rabbi of Great Britain.

And he was interviewed on TV one night. And he was asked why the Jews had been persecuted so greatly down through the generations. Why do the people hate the Jews so much? And you know what he said? He said, it's dislike of the unlike.

The Jews are different. That's what he said. He said, it's dislike of the unlike.

It's because we're different. It started way back in Egypt, didn't it? Under Pharaoh. And then, of course, Babylonian captivity and the Inquisition and the time of the Maccabees and Hitler and Saddam Hussein and neo-Nazism in the world today and the coming tribulation period.

But you know, there's a spiritual application in this for us, too. The word holiness really basically means different. Sanctification means to set apart.

A sanctified people are set apart from the herd. So in a sense, they're different. Holiness means to be to be different.

Peter says that first Peter chapter four, for they think it's strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. Get it? You don't engage in the activities of the world. So what do they do? They speak evil of you.

The dislike of the unlike. Now, there's a great dislike for Christianity in the United States today, as you know. I wish I could say it was because of holiness.

It should be, but it isn't. It's because of what people see on television. It's because of the televangelists, you know, and some of the monstrous things that they see and some of the monstrous things that they hear as well.

Some of it is justified. I think some of the Christian bashing is justified. People being trumpeted as Christians while they're living like the devil in this country.

It brings reproach on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I would like to feel that the church of the Lord Jesus would be in such a condition. If you win, you win.

How can you more than win? Well, I think it's because the victory is ours before the battle's over. In that sense, we really are more than victorious while still in the battle. I love to see in the book of Esther that nothing happens by chance for the child of God.

Nothing is fortuitous. There's no luck or chance as far as our relation with God is concerned. I love to see that although God's may be hidden, he's still watching over his people.

He guards, guides, and cares for them. And I think I mentioned Sunday down in New Jersey. To me, it is a bomb for my heart to realize that God couldn't love you and me more than he's doing at this very minute.

That's pretty intimate, isn't it? God couldn't love you and me more than he loves us right now because he loves us with the same love that he loves his son. Esther, the book of Esther teaches me that I can't always trace God's hand, but I can always trust his heart. I can always trust his heart.

He hasn't made his first mistake yet, and he never will. He never will. I like to see in the book of Esther that God controls nations as well as individuals.

He works with nations and deals with nations, and he makes the wrath of man to praise him, and what won't praise him, he'll restrain it. That's great, isn't it? I see, as we said before, that we must stand for convictions. There are things in the Christian life that are not negotiable, as E. W. Tozer said.

And it brings the question to my mind, McDonald, for what would you be willing to die? Now, I confess tonight I don't have dying grace, but I really believe if I have the conviction and the time comes, God will give me grace for it. Don't you believe that? Yeah, no use to look ahead to the martyrs' fires. I often think of that bishop in England who was under pressure to recant, and in a moment of weakness, he took his pen in his right hand and he wrote a recantation.

Was it Latimer? And then after he had signed the recantation, he realized what he had done. He had been unfaithful to Jesus Christ, and he went to them and he said, My hand signed it, but my heart wasn't in it. And they said, You'll have to die at the fire.

And he said, You'll have to proceed. The day of his execution came and the fire was built, and he went out there with his hands his hands tied. And they said, Do you have any last requests? And he said, Yes, just please release the fetters on my hands.

They did. And he took that right hand that signed the recantation, and he put it in the fire. He wanted it to be the first part of him to burn.

He said, Perish this unworthy hand. Perish this unworthy hand. God gave him grace for it.

You and I don't have it tonight. God can be trusted. The Book of Esther tells me that God can be trusted.

You know, during the war, there was a widow. There was a lady, a widow out in Australia, and she had four sons in the military. They were all in the Australian army.

And there was a chaplain there in the area, and it was his duty to take the telegrams to the house when the news came. And one day, this dear Christian woman, whose roots were deep in God, she saw the chaplain coming up the front walk. At least she knew part of the story.

And she went to the door, and she opened the door, and she said to him, Which one? And he said, he could hardly get the words out of his mouth. His chin was quivering. He could hardly get the words out.

He said, All four. She said, They all belonged to the Lord. And he chose to take them.

And they got down on their knees and prayed. I'll tell you, that's it, isn't it? That's it. God always raises his hand, but you can trust his heart to do what is right.

We'll try to finish the book tomorrow night, the will of God. Shall we pray? Our Father, we pray that in this day of flabbiness, to this day of weak spines, that you'll give us, your people, to stand for the truth of God, no matter what the cost may be. Help us to be true to Jesus, even though we endure the mockery and persecution of the world in the process.

We thank you for speaking to our hearts through this wonderful book of Esther. And as we continue on, we pray that you'll unlock its treasures to us. So we ask it in the Savior's name and for his sake.

Amen.

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