

# Studies in Esther-01 Esther1-2

by William MacDonald

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*The book of Esther shows how God works out his purposes in spite of human sin and self-will, and how he uses even the smallest details to achieve his goals.*

**Duration:** 51:56

**Scripture:** Esther 1:1, Esther 2:13, Psalm 31:15, Mark 7:26, John 10:3, Acts 2:23, Romans 8:28

**Topics:** "Studies"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Esther from the Bible. He starts by highlighting how God was displeased with the behavior of men who were given over to wine and drunkenness. He then focuses on King Ahasuerus and his impure motives in summoning Queen Vashti to parade her beauty before a drunken crowd. The preacher also introduces the character of Haman, a wicked man who ingratiates himself with the king and sets in motion a plan for a holocaust against the Jews. The sermon emphasizes the importance of standing for what is right and attributes the willingness to do so to the influence of a mother.

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## Transcript

All the books of the Bible are wonderful, but there's something special about the book of Esther. So, shall we turn to Esther, chapter 1, and we'll read that first of all. Esther, chapter 1. Now, it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, this was Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia, over 127 promises.

In those days when King Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the citadel, that in the third year of his reign he made a feast for all his officials and servants, the powers of Persia and Media, the nobles and the princes of the provinces before him. When he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the splendor of his excellent majesty for many days, 180 days in all. Would you like to have been at that feast? And when these days were completed, the king made a feast lasting seven days for all the people who were present in Shushan the citadel, from great to small, in the court of the garden of the king's palaces.

There were white and blue linen curtains fastened with cords of fine linen and purple on silver rods and marble pillars, and the couches were of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of alabaster, turquoise, and white and black marble, and they served drinks in gold and vessels, each vessel being different from the other, with royal wine in abundance according to the generosity of the king. In accordance with the law, the drinking was not compulsory, for so the king had ordered all the all the offices of his household that

they should do according to each man's pleasure. Queen Vashti also made a feast for the women in the royal palace, which belonged to King Ahasuerus.

Now, it's quite a long chapter, so I think we're just going to stop there for the time being. Walwood says in one of his books that this book has all the marks of great literature, quite apart from the fact that it's the inspired word of God. Great literature has conflict, antagonism, tension, irony, the things you look for in a book of that sort.

And J. G. Bellet, he speaks, and I like this, he speaks of the marvelous interweaving of circumstances which we get in this history. There's plot and counterplot, wheels within wheels, circumstances hanging up on circumstances, all formed together to work out the wonderful plans of God. Now, there's something remarkable about this book, and that is the name of God isn't found anywhere in it.

And because of that, some people have even suggested it shouldn't be in the Bible. I wish people who made statements like that would study the Bible, because if they did, they wouldn't make such outrageous, outlandish statements. It is true that the name of God, mentioned in this book, however, it's hidden in this book five different times.

It's hidden in what we call acrostic form. And I'd like to demonstrate that to you, and maybe if two of our young men will come and just pass these out. If I went up here, I'd be one of those young men.

Give you a minute to get these, and then we'll look at it. Now, one of the names of God in the Old Testament is Jehovah. In the Hebrew, it would be something like Yahweh.

And in the Hebrew, there are no vowels. So, Jehovah in the Hebrew would be spelt Y-H-V-H. That would be Jehovah in the Hebrew.

Y-H-V-H. Yahweh. Now, in the Hebrew, also, you read from right to left, not from left to right, the way we do.

If you'll turn, you won't see this, because you don't have a Hebrew Bible, and I don't know Hebrew either. But in chapter one, verse 20, there are four words there. Now, don't forget we're reading from right to left.

Chapter one, verse 20. You'll notice, reading from right to left, that the last letter of four words is Y-H-V-H. The last letter.

You got that? It's a little bit hard to follow, and I don't blame you if you don't. In chapter five, verse four, the word Jehovah reads the other direction. It's the last letter of four words, H-V-H-Y.

So, the order of the letters is reversed. Then in chapter five, verse 13, don't forget we're reading from right to left, the first letters of four words in that verse are Y-H-V-H. And in chapter seven, verse seven, the first letters of four words are H-V-H-Y, and that Jehovah spelt the other way.

Then in chapter seven, verse five, there's another name for God in the Old Testament, Eiyah. And in chapter seven, verse five, the I Am, that name of God, reading from right to left, H-Y-H-E. Now, there's a vowel there, but anyway, that's to help you understand.

So, that's the name of God, E-H-Y-H. Now, somebody has tried to illustrate this in English. It's not an accurate translation, but it's close if you go and read the verses in the Hebrew.

Do respect our ladies all. Now, there you have the word Lord spelt L, reading right to left, L-O-R-D. The word Lord is hidden in that sentence.

Do respect our ladies all, so give their husbands great and small. Well, that's pretty much what verse 20 of chapter one says. Then, notice, ill to fear decreed I find.

There, in English, the last letters of four words spell L-O-R-D. Ill to fear decreed I find toward me in the monarch's mind, chapter seven, verse seven. Is that clear? No.

I wonder, could you ask me a question that would help me clarify it? Oh, you won't find them in the English at all. It's in the Hebrew, and you're reading from right to left. And it wouldn't be these letters anyway.

It'd be Hebrew letters, you know. But this is the only way we can illustrate it, Gary. Not to my knowledge.

But I think before we get through with the book, you'll marvel at it. In fact, this itself is very significant. I'll explain in a what.

Is there anybody else that could ask a question that I could clarify this? Well, if not, maybe if you want to come up afterwards, I'll try to do it. It is complicated, so don't be alarmed if you don't. I'm sorry if the boys and girls probably won't take it in, but I think the little poem at the bottom illustrates it.

If you just see that, that the word Lord, L-O-R-D, is hidden in that poem at the bottom. One time it's hidden spelled forward, and the other time it's hidden spelled backward, right? Well, that's the way it is in Hebrew with the name of God in the book of Esther, and it's four times Yahweh and one time Eya. Okay? But you say, why? Why is God's name hidden there? Well, because God had told Moses, God had told Moses that if the people, this is a prophecy, if the people went off into idolatry, if they forsook the Lord and started to worship idols, he would hide his face from them.

Deuteronomy 31, 17. Deuteronomy 31, 17. I'll just break right into the middle of the passage here.

It says, Then my anger shall be aroused against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them. There it is, the word hide. And they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them, so that they will say in that day, Have not these evils come upon us? Because our God is not among us.

So, the absence of God's name in this book teaches us that behind the visible events of history, there's an almighty and faithful love that cherishes and protects the broken and scattered people of God. Really wonderful, really wonderful. You can't see the name of God in the book of Esther.

Boy, before we're through, you'll see that he was all the time working out his wonderful purposes. Marvelous, really. You'll have to pardon me if I'm enthusiastic, because I really am.

It would be very difficult for anybody to write about the book of Esther, or to speak about the book of Esther, without quoting these lines from James Russell Lowell. I wonder if Mr. Lowell had the book of Esther in mind when he wrote it. He said, Careless seems the great avenger.

History's pages but record one death grapple. In the darkness twixt old systems and the word. Truth forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne.

Yet that scaffold holds the future, and behind the dim unknown standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own. That's beautiful. Yet that scaffold sways the future, and behind the dim unknown standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own.

Now, before this had happened, King Cyrus of Persia had made a decree that any of the Jews that were held in captivity in that country could go back to the land. And under Ezra and under Zerubbabel and Ezra and Nehemiah were some Jews that went back to Jerusalem. Some stayed in Persia.

Esther and her cousin Mordecai were among those who stayed in Persia. So really this book takes place between Ezra chapter six and seven. The events in this book take place between Ezra chapter six and seven, but they take place in Persia, not in Canaan, not in the promised land.

And many commentators, I think most of the commentators you read, they'll say that because Esther and Mordecai and the others didn't go back to the land, they were backslidden. They were out of touch with God. And this was an indication of their spiritual declension.

Also the fact that prayer is never mentioned in this book. That is remarkable. Prayer is never mentioned in the book.

But at the most crucial moment in the book, Esther and her seven maidens fasted for three days. And it's inconceivable to me that they fasted without praying. I just can't believe that they did.

So once again, although prayer isn't mentioned, I believe it's there just the same. Very much there. Now Esther, as I say, is used as an illustration of a woman who was out of fellowship with God.

First of all, she wanted to be the queen of a pagan king. You know, she was entered in the beauty contest to become the queen. Also she concealed her nationality.

She didn't say, I am a Jewess. And she must have eaten a lot of non-kosher food because the diet there in the palace, you can believe, included hot dogs and rabbit and shrimp, which a Jew was not allowed to eat. In fact, they say, well, her Jewishness seems to be more a matter of birth than of her personal conviction.

And poor Mordecai comes in for a little bit of bashing, too. He concealed his identity and he commanded Esther to do so, too, up to a point. Well, what are you going to say about this? First of all, I think we have a tendency to look at the New Testament through New Testament eyes.

And the older I get, I hope the Lord will make me more mellow and less ready to jump on people than that. It seems to me that we're too ready to criticize some of these dear saints. I'd like to put myself in Esther's place and say, how would you have acted in the circumstances? And that brings me up short.

Also, there's an interesting verse in Ezra 1, verse 5. It says this. I'll just read it to you. It speaks of the returning exile, those who did go back as those whose spirits God had moved to go up and build the house of the Lord, which is in Jerusalem.

In other words, those that went back were those whom God had moved their spirits to go back. Maybe he didn't move Esther's spirit to go back. Maybe he didn't move Mordecai's spirit to go back.

Why? Because he had a bigger job for them to do there. In this book, you see, God is the God of providence. He's the God who moves the checkers on the checkerboard.

Does that destroy man's free will? No. God, in his providence, decided to give man free will. And so they're not an antagonism at all.

Somebody said to Spurgeon, how do you reconcile God's sovereignty with man's free will? And he said, I never try to reconcile friends. And I think that's a very good answer. I never try to reconcile friends.

These things are not against each other. They work together. And you'll see that in this book.

You'll see man having his wickedness and God having his way. You'll see God making the wrath of man to praise him. And what won't praise him, he restrains.

It's really quite wonderful. Well, the day opens quite routinely there in the palace. I can just look down and I can see people scurrying around there going about their daily duties, going down the long corridors and out into the courtyard and all the rest.

And none of them is the least bit aware of the momentous events that hang in the balance there. In Persia, it's really a commonplace. Look at the first words, now it came to pass.

Well, I don't think that would rate in a bestseller today to start your book that way. Now it came to pass. But you know, to me, that's part of the thrill of the Christian life of being a real believer.

You never know when a day dawns what tremendous events are going to take place or might even begin that day. You never know. It's really thrilling to be walking with God.

And I think of Mordecai and Esther that day. They probably thought they were just nobodies. You know what I mean? They little thought that in 1994, some people sitting in a church auditorium, in a school auditorium in San Lorenzo, California, would be talking about them.

They little thought that their names would be immortalized in the Word of God. Francis Gray, in his poem *Elegy*, written in a country churchyard, he said, So many a flower is born to bloom unseen and waste its fragrance in the desert air. Well, that's okay for the world, but it's not okay for God.

With God, no flower is born to bloom unseen or waste its fragrance. Every one of God's people is precious to him, and everything is meaningful to him. Well, Ahasuerus decides he's going to throw a big feast, rather typical of the rulers in Persia.

I remember when the Shah of Persia was in power, and they celebrated, I forget what year, anniversary of the kingdom of Persia. In all my reading of *Time Magazine*, I have never read anything so lavish or anything so glorious as the Persian celebration of the founding of that kingdom. It was really outstanding.

I'd love to go back and find those things today. He was dazzling his guests with the splendor, with his power, and with the splendor of his reign. And get this, the wine was served in golden vessels, no two alike.

It's really incredible. The wine served in golden vessels. I don't think any of our sisters can match that with their bone china.

The feast lasted 180 days. I hope it wasn't the same people that were there every day. They'd be balloons at the end of 180 days.

What I rather think happened was that there were delegations coming in from various parts of the kingdom. Don't you think? I hope so. I hope so.

I hope that there were delegations coming in during 180 days, and he reached an awful lot more people that way. And, of course, Vashti put on a feast, too. She wouldn't be left out.

She was hosting a feast for the palace women. There was a second feast that Ahasuerus put on. It lasted seven days, and God looked down from heaven, and he said to himself, I don't like what I see going on now.

In other words, he saw men given over to wine. He saw men drunken. They were inebriated, and then he sees the king sending Vashti, sending seven men to get the queen and tell her to come in and parade her beauty.

Now, dear friends, it's spoken very modestly and very lightly in the Bible. The Bible is good that way, but I want to tell you the king's motives were not pure, and that would not have been a moral exhibition, I want to tell you that. You know very well that the women in that time would be very heavily veiled, but I'm sure he didn't want her to come in heavily veiled, and she was going to come in into a room filled with people under the influence of liquor.

God's not in favor of kings giving themselves over to wine. Listen to what he says. It's not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes intoxicating drink, lest they drink and forget the law and pervert the justice of all the afflicted.

And so God looks down, and he sees this going on, and he says he's not obeying me. He's walking in self-will, but I'll harness his sin. I'll show him something and work out my purposes in spite of it.

The God of Providence is a book of Esther. As Edgard goes to work, he starts to work on the conscience of Queen Vashti. He knows what it's all about, and she said, I will not go.

She was a woman of character. She was a woman of righteousness. She was not going to debase herself.

She realized that her beauty was for her husband, and not for those drunken guests from all over the kingdom. And I imagine God saying, good for you, Vashti. Good work.

You're going to have to suffer for your conviction. Never mind. You'll be honored for it, for your rectitude, and for your modesty.

How was she honored for it? About the last you ever hear about her. How was she honored? You're reading about her today in a favorable light in the book of God. Not bad, is it? I don't think that's bad.

Well, the palace is thrown into panic. You know, I mean, here's a queen disobeying the king, the highest authority in the land. And so the king's advisors all gather together, and they say, look, king, this is a case of militant feminism.

If I was there, I would have piped up rubbish. It wasn't that at all. It wasn't a case of militant.

It was a case of modesty, and a case of righteousness. But they said, look, if you don't do something, this is going to spread throughout the whole kingdom, and none of the women will be obeying their husband. None of the women will be submissive to their husband.

They said the queen must go. And so an unalterable decree was written deposing Queen Bathsheba. Now, this is important to know that the law of the needs of the person's wants, it was written.

It couldn't be changed. Even the king couldn't change it. The king himself.

After he put his signet ring on it, that's it. And nothing could change that law. And they think it's a great, it's a great victory for the men, you know.

So that day in the palace in Shushan, they said, wow, we got a great victory. Our wisdom and power has conquered. You know, actually, they were only doing what the Lord would have done anyway.

All they were doing was accomplishing the purposes of God. You say, what do you mean? Listen, Vashti had to get off that throne, and a Jewish maiden had to get on. You say, what? Because of what was going to happen.

Because of what was going to happen. Because the lives of all of her people were at stake, the Jewish maiden. So, I think it's tremendous when you think of that.

And this is one of the wonderful things about God, that oftentimes people do things, and they think they're defying God, but they're not. They're working out his purposes. A little later in the book, a man named Haman builds a gallows 75 feet high on which to hang Mordecai the Jew.

God looks down, he says, thank you very much, Haman. I've got a use for those gallows, but it's not for Mordecai. Not for Mordecai.

And you see it again in John chapter 9. There's a blind man there, and the Lord gives him sight, and the religious leaders are furious. They couldn't give him sight, but they're furious that the Lord gave him sight. And so, they come and quiz him, and everything he says is tremendous testimony to the Lord, although he didn't really have clear ideas at first as to who had healed him.

And finally, well, let's look at the passages. I think it's worth turning to John 9, 34. They finally can't take it anymore.

His answers to them are so tremendous. John 9, 34. Says, they answered and said to him, you were completely born in sins, and you are teaching us, and they cast him out.

And the Lord Jesus says, thank you very much. I would have let him out anyway. John 10, verse 3. John 10, verse 3. To him, the doorkeeper opens.

John the Baptist was the doorkeeper, and the sheep hear his voice, that is the shepherd's voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. So really, when they cast him out, they were only doing what Jesus would have done anyway. He would have delivered the man from the oppression of the Judaism of that day into the liberty of the sons of God.

And then, of course, in Acts 2, 23. The great illustration of this principle. Acts 2, 23.

The crucifixion of our Lord. It says, him being delivered by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken and by lawless hands have crucified and put to death. And the purposes of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, had to die as our substitute, as a sacrifice for our sins.

Then put him to the cross. You have taken and with wicked hands you have crucified and slain. Resulted in the greatest victory for God that ever took place.

And the greatest blessing for mankind as well. And so, man has his wickedness, but God has his way. Queen Vashti is gone, not forgotten, and the stage is set.

I don't think Vashti was a militant feminist at all. She suffered for righteousness sake. And Peter says that this is commendable if because of conscience toward God, one endures grief, suffering wrongfully.

For what credit is it if when you were beaten for your faults, you take it patiently, but when you do good and suffer for it, you take it patiently. This is commendable before God. A man's heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his step.

And so, they have to start looking for a new queen. And they send, chapter 2, they send delegates throughout the whole country of Persia. And they are going to bring in the most beautiful women, most beautiful young women that they can find to be the queen for Ahasuerus.

There's a fellow there that the Lord guides, his name is Haggai, and he's kind of the chief eunuch there in the harem. And the Lord starts to work on his intellect and his emotions and his will. God arranging the circumstances of history.

And then there's a Jew out there in the courtyard. He's at the gate as a matter of fact, which may mean that he had an official position there in the kingdom. His name is Mordecai.

And this is most interesting to me that God has stationed his people at various times, his chosen earthly people, the Jews. You know, years ago there was a man in Washington, his name was Bernard Baruch, and he was an advisor to president. He sat on a park bench there in Washington.

I'm serious. Bernard Baruch, that was his office, a park bench in Washington, a Jew, and he was an advisor to president of the United States. I can't help thinking of Bernard Baruch when I think of Mordecai.

And he's out there and he doesn't have a telephone, he doesn't have a walkie-talkie, but there's a good bush telephone at work, if you know what I mean. And he sends word into Esther at a critical juncture, don't reveal the fact that you're a Jewette. Oh, you say, disloyalty to their own people.

Wait a minute. God is working out his purposes. Certain things have to happen first in this book before succeeding events can take place.

He didn't tell her to lie. And I don't think we're obligated to tell everything we know, do you? I don't think we're obligated to tell everything we know. And she certainly never lied about it.

Well, Haggai's charm school has lasted a year now, and it's time for all these beautiful women to parade themselves before the king, and they can wear whatever clothing they want, and whatever cosmetics they want, anything that they think will influence the mind and affection of the king. And God says to Esther, as it were, no audible voice, but don't worry, Esther, you just follow Haggai's counsel, and I'll control his insights. Esther's thinking, I don't have a ghost of a chance.

I'm Jewish, I'm not Persian. God is saying, Esther, I'm greater than any racial barriers that ever existed. And I think that's one of the thrills of the book of Esther, that all kinds of barriers brought up against the people of God and the accomplishment of God's purposes, they meant nothing.

Even an unalterable decree. What can you do with an unalterable decree? Hold it. Just hold it, and you'll see what God can do with it.

God is greater than any unalterable decree. I think that's beautiful. The king's heart is in the hands of the Lord.

As the rivers of water, he turns it with us to wherever he will. So the time comes, and Esther appears before the king, and what do you know? He loves her more than all the other women. I can just see him there placing the queen's crown upon her head, and of course this was the occasion for another great feast.

Those Persians really loved to eat, didn't they? They're not the lost people that love to eat either. He puts the crown upon, they have a great feast, and they exchange gifts almost like Christmas in this country. It was a holiday.

But nobody knows yet that Esther is not a Persian. Nobody knows that she is Jewish. What a coincidence.

What a coincidence that among all the beautiful women of Persia, an obscure Jewish maiden should be chosen to be queen. No coincidence at all. The providence of God.

Nothing happens by chance in the life of a child of God. Nothing happens by chance. Things don't just happen.

They're planned. Well, you know, there are spiritual lessons in this for us, too. This beauty contest.

There's a certain way in which God is putting his people through a charm school down here, preparing us for the day we're going to go in to see the king and his beauty. Only we're not using beauty out of bottles. That's not the idea.

God is trying to take those who belong to him and conform them to the image of Christ. That's what it is. So you can go over all of that with the ointments and spices and cosmetics and apparel and adornments and jewels, and you can say, yes, well, lifetime is training time for reigning time.

And one day we will be with the king, the Lord Jesus Christ, but we've got to be schooled before we go in. Years ago, I remember when Queen Elizabeth was much younger and she was going to take a flight across the Atlantic. And there was an article in one of the magazines about the intensive training that her flight attendants had so that they'd know how to behave in the presence of the queen, so that they know how to serve the queen, what the protocol was and what the courtesy was in front of the queen.

And I said, oh, yes, that's what it is with us, too. That's just what it is with us. You know, the marvel is that when we're finally presented to the king, we're going to be without spot or wrinkle or mole or birthmark or any such thing.

And I think that's marvelous. Really, really marvelous. Peter says, don't 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 to the sight of God.

The danger is that we're satisfied with our present spiritual condition. That's the danger, danger for me. It's so easy to get in a rut and think, well, here I am.

Uh, and I'm satisfied with myself. Satisfaction is the grave of progress. Every one of us needs to be changed.

I like verse 13 of chapter two. It says, um, thus prepared each young woman went to the king and she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the woman's quarters to the king's palace. And I read that verse and I say, what would I like to take to the king's palace? That's a good question for all of us, isn't it? We're all going to pass off this theme remote as it might seem to some of you today.

And if you're a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you're going to go into the king's palace. What would you like to take with you? Good question. You won't take your sterling.

You won't take your, your sports car, clothing. You won't take any of that stuff. What would you like to take with you? In that hymn, we often sing as one of the verses, uh, the last words of Samuel Rutherford.

He lived in a little town called Anwerth. It was by the Solway river. And the poem says fair Anwerth by the Solway to me, there are ever dear in from the gates of heaven.

I dropped for the 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 bring souls with him to heaven.

He wanted to be faithful and witnessing to other people and see them saved by the grace of God and go with him to heaven. I want to tell you, this is marvelous. The way Esther came to power there in Persia, but it's not marvelous as our Cinderella story.

When you think of us, those of us who are saved, ungodly, you know, how we've been taken from rags to riches. It's incredible, really. Absolutely incredible.

Heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. Why was Esther chosen? Well, all I'll tell you right now is that she was chosen before God's people needed help. God was arranging everything on the stage, wasn't he? Great.

He said, before they call, I will answer. He had set the wheels in motion. He knew what was good.

They didn't know what was ahead. He knew what was ahead. They didn't know that there was a planned holocaust ahead.

God knew. And he's setting the stage in motion. Now, Mordecai is down there at the king's gate.

The usual bustle and activity going around. And God, as it were, he doesn't say that, we don't read this in the Bible. As it were, he says to Mordecai, see those two fellows over there? Their names are Bigfan and Teresh.

See, they're talking together. He said, just kind of amble over in their direction. Don't go too far.

Don't make it too obvious. But just go over close enough so you can hear what's going on. You know, in all the way that they could, that Mordecai could move in that court, here he moves over close enough to these folks.

Here's what they're saying. What are they saying? They're plotting the assassination of the king. Now, isn't that incredible? Isn't that incredible that God would so work on the intellect, emotions, and will of Mordecai

that he would just be at the right place at the right time? Marvelous.

This is what I mean when I think of the providence of God. God moving the checkers on the checkerboard. He does.

Is he destroying man's free will? Not at all. Not at all. Man does this.

We heard that. We knew that with Ahasuerus, how he had his free will. And then God says, okay, now tell Esther about the plot.

Just get word in through the bush telephone into Esther and tell her what's happening. So he did. That happened, he told, got the word into Esther, and Esther reported it to the authorities, and of course they took care of Bigfin and Teresh.

But that was about it. A record was made in the chronicles, you know, of Persia. A record was duly entered, you know, and a man named Mordecai exposed this plot on the king.

He certainly wasn't given the silver cross or the bronze plaque or purple heart or anything else. It went unnoticed, practically. It practically went unnoticed.

But that wasn't very fair, was it? Yeah, it was good. It was good. This wasn't the right time for him to be honored.

You have to hold your horses in this book. You have to be patient. In this book, God is working out his details.

Now, I suppose Mordecai could think, hmm, that's some gratitude. Here I save the life of the king and I'm not rewarded for it. And I think maybe you feel that way sometimes.

You feel, boy, the only way you can get gratitude in this life is to look in the dictionary for it. But listen, heaven is the best and safest place for us to get our reward. The best and safest place for us to read the results of our service.

Another design coincidence. Why did he happen to hear the plot against the king? Well, you know, there's a five-year interval between chapters two and three. That's interesting in the book.

When you read the book, everything moves along swiftly. There were years passing by in the book. Years where you could just bite your fingernails, you know, or say, no use, you know.

What's the use? Well, enter the wicked man. This is part of all good literature. This man's name is Haman.

And this fellow gets in there and he succeeds in ingratiating himself in the mind of the king. He was really a rascal. He was a very wicked man.

And how the king allowed himself to be duped like this is really something else. So, this man Haman, well, first of all, he had a gigantic case of egoism. Now that he was the chief prince of Persia, he wanted everybody to bow to him.

Who did he think he was? God? Well, that's the kind of a man he was. He wanted everybody to bow to him. Pride and arrogance, you can hardly believe it.

But there's one man who won't bow to him, and his name is Mordecai. He won't bow to him. Why? Because he's a Jew.

And because he will only pay homage to the one true God. That's why. And he refuses to bow to him.

And God is saying, good for you, Mordecai. Don't you bow to that man whose breath is in his nostrils. Keep your conscience live and keen, no matter what the results will be.

And if people challenge you for your insubordination, you can tell them that you are a Jew and that you bow only to the true God. You have to obey me and not anybody else. As far as we read in the record, he's the only one that wouldn't bow to Haman.

That's really something, isn't it? How would you like to be the only one standing true to God while thousands of people around you are all bowing to a golden image or something? And listen, it was more than that. His decision not to bow to Haman implicated all his people. What's the case of himself? And we're going to see it implicated all of his people in this whole matter.

I cannot read this book without thinking of a poem by Amy Carmichael, and I'll explain why. 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 boat, the sea? And then she said, keep us in quiet through the age-long minute when the waves are high and the wind is shrill. Can the boat sink, dear Lord, while thou art in it? Can the heart faint that waiteth on thy will? I love that line. Keep us in quiet through the age-long minute.

Have you had experiences in life when it was an age-long minute? It was only a short period of time, but it seemed like eternity. Some pressure on you, some heartache, some sorrow. Can the boat sink, dear Lord, when thou art in it? Can the heart faint that waiteth on thy will? Well, Mordecai thanked God for him.

He had courage to swim against the tide, even if all around him were doing that. I think of Eric Little in this regard, who wouldn't run on the Lord's Day in the Olympics. He finally was put in another race on a weekday and won the championship and set a new world record.

Joe E. Brown was a top-notch movie and Broadway comedian of the World War II era. When he was entertaining American troops in the South Pacific, he was asked by one of the soldiers to tell him some dirty jokes. And 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.

I've never done an act that I couldn't perform before my mother, and I never will. You know what happened? The soldiers rocked the jungles with applause. I don't know Joe E. Brown from John Wayne, you know, but it's marvelous to find a man like that that'll stand on principle.

Martin Luther said, if I had heard that as many devils would set up on me as there are tiles on the roofs, I should nonetheless have ridden there. My conscience is captive to the word of God. Here I stand.

I can do no other. That's wonderful, isn't it? My conscience is captive to the word of God. Here I stand.

I can do no other. From where does that come? From where does that quality come in a man that enables him to be, you know, to have a spine of steel? Is that something you get in your genes? I don't believe that for a minute. Where does it come from? What makes a Martin Luther or an Eric Little or a Joey Brown? I'll

tell you where I think it comes from.

It comes from a certain kind of a mother. She breathes that into her children. She teaches them that.

Always be true, no matter what the cost may be. I don't know anything about Mordecai's mother, but I believe he got it there. At his mother's knees, at his mother's feet.

What a challenge to mothers anywhere. That's why I think that William Bennett's book, many of you have it, I think, Book of Virtues, the new book that's on the market. Well, it's not the new now, but William Bennett, he's a Roman Catholic, was the Secretary of Education, and he wrote this book on various virtues for a mother or a parent to read to the children and teach them these things.

Teach them these virtues. Really a good book if you don't have it. I mean, there is some mythology in it, but there's a lot of Bible stories in it too, and Aesop's fables and poetry that teach these lessons as well.

Book of Virtues. They can hardly keep it in down there at Costco. So that's the thought I'd like to leave with you today.

Where does this willingness to stand for what's right come from? I think it comes from a mother. Not every mother, but a mother. What a challenge to mothers everywhere.

Well, we're going to go on with this exciting book. So far, things have been moving slowly, and so far everything's against the Jews, God's people in the Old Testament. But the last chapter hasn't been written.

No chapter is the story of a person's life, and this gets more thrilling as we go along. All right. Father, we thank you for your precious word, how much it means to our hearts today.

We just praise you with all our hearts for it. We thank you that we know you as the God of Providence, that nothing happens by chance or fortune in our lives, that there's no such a thing as luck for those who love you. We thank you today our times are in your hands, and that you are working all things together for good to those who love you, who are called according to your purpose.

Help us to revel in your word as we learn of your greatness and your goodness. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

I believe Gary has a closing hymn for us.

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