

NAVIGATING DIFFICULT TIMES

(Book of Esther)

Deepening Difficulty

TEXT: Esther 5:9 – 6:14

INTRODUCTION: Sometimes we are caught up in difficult times that are not of our own making. Such were Esther and Mordecai.

However, sometimes we bring trouble upon ourselves. Such was the case for Haman, the chief advisor to Ahasuerus, the King of Persia.

- The plot to kill the Jews had of course originated with Satan, but Haman had quickly adopted it as his own.
- Haman beguiled the king to approve the plan converting it into a part of the law of the Medes and the Persians.
- Haman was headed for deep difficulty, but he did not know it.
 - He did not know because he was unaware that he was standing in opposition to the One True and Living God.
 - He did not know that he was living his life contrary to the commands and desires of His Creator.
 - Haman was willfully ignorant of the standards by which the Judge of the Universe would try him and find him guilty.

But, my friend, a lack of understanding of the law of gravity will not cause you to hover in the air when you step off the top of a building. Not knowing the Word and way of God does not keep the principles by which He causes the universe to operate to pass you by as you plead ignorance. If not knowing the law of man is not an excuse from the penalties of violation, how much more so with the commands of God.

Our text today opens in Esther 5:9. Haman is in fact a very happy man. He has just been treated to a royal surprise, literally. Queen Esther appeared unexpectedly in the King's Court and had been granted an audience with His Highness, her husband. Haman could not really understand the indescribable favor which Esther enjoyed with the king. The favor certainly was not the king's infatuation with her beauty, for after choosing her as his queen, he had quickly tired of her in his bed each night, and had returned to his practice of calling in a concubine from his harem.

No, this favor was something else, something he could not quite put his finger on, almost as if it were supernatural. He didn't really believe much in the supernatural, but the favor

Queen Esther enjoyed with a man everybody else knew to be a vile combination of cruelty and capriciousness, that favor was certainly unexplainable.

But Haman was a happy man, because he had been the beneficiary of Esther's favor with the king. When she entered his presence uninvited, an act that had been the quick and gruesome death of many presumptuous souls across the years, the king had quickly extended the golden scepter, granting her admission to his presence. Not only that, the king immediately asked Esther what she wanted, and told her whatever it was, she could have it up to half the kingdom!

But the only thing the queen requested was that the king should come to a banquet she had prepared for the king and for his royal advisor Haman! He had been quickly summoned out of his office, been told what had happened, and ushered into the presence of the king and queen and together the three walked to the beautiful banquet hall where a feast awaited them.

And then, at the banquet, there was both more mystery and more joy. Again the king asked Esther what she wanted and promised her up to half of the kingdom. But the queen simply said she wanted King Ahasuerus and Haman to come to another banquet tomorrow, and she promised to reveal her request at that time.

And that is why we read in verse 9 of Esther, chapter 5,

Esther 5:9 So Haman went out that day joyful and with a glad heart;

But Haman's happiness was only twelve words long. It was so quickly and easily spoiled. For we read,

but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, and that he did not stand or tremble before him, he was filled with indignation against Mordecai.

Ahh, we remember Mordecai. We know he is the queen's cousin who adopted Esther when her parents died, but Haman probably does not know that. We also know that Mordecai is a Jew, and Haman does most certainly know that. We also know that ever since Haman was promoted by the king to be his chief advisor, everybody both inside and outside of the palace bowed before Haman and paid him homage. Everybody bowed except Mordecai who would not bend his knee or neck to a man as perverse and wicked as Haman.

Haman already hated the Jews, as did a number of the people of the empire, but Mordecai's refusal to bow before him fanned the glowing coals of his hatred of the chosen people of God into a fiery rage. It was this hatred that caused him to be so easily seduced by the evil one to concoct the plan to exterminate the Jewish race in a single day.

And so, while Haman had already planned out his vengeance upon Mordecai and all of his close and distant relatives, the day of death had not yet come. To act viciously

against Mordecai and slit his throat in the street at that moment might jeopardize his greater scheme, so we read,

Esther 5:10–14 10 Nevertheless Haman restrained himself and went home, and he sent and called for his friends and his wife Zeresh.

11 Then Haman told them of his great riches, the multitude of his children, everything in which the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the officials and servants of the king.

12 Moreover Haman said, “Besides, Queen Esther invited no one but me to come in with the king to the banquet that she prepared; and tomorrow I am again invited by her, along with the king.

13 Yet all this avails me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king’s gate.”

14 Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, “Let a gallows be made, fifty cubits high, and in the morning suggest to the king that Mordecai be hanged on it; then go merrily with the king to the banquet.” And the thing pleased Haman; so he had the gallows made.

Now, we need to pause to ask the question: what are the root causes of Haman’s deepening difficulty? He does not see it, but it is God who is telling the story, and He makes the causes very plain to us.

PRIDE DEEPENS DIFFICULTY.

1 John 2:16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

What is pride? **Pride is thinking more highly of oneself than God thinks.** God knows the truth.

- Pride takes credit for possessions rather than acknowledging they are a gift from God.
- Pride takes credit for accomplishments rather than acknowledging they are brought about by the providence of God.
- **Pride says, “I earned it. I worked for it. I deserve it,” not giving the greater credit to the God who gave intellect, strength, skill, opportunity, and success.**

The other root cause for Haman was bitterness.

BITTERNESS DEEPENS DIFFICULTY.

What is bitterness? **Bitterness is a severe, abiding, unresolved hurt.**

- **The hurt is one which seemingly nothing can soothe.**
- **The intensity of the hurt does not decrease with time; in fact it may increase.**
- **The memory of the hurt is always fresh.**
- **Remembering the hurt always renews the intense pain.**
- **Whatever happens seems related to the hurt.**

As with Haman, **Bitterness is often directed toward a person.**

- **At a person who caused the hurt.**
 - A person seldom remains bitter about a single hurt.
 - The unresolved hurt heightens sensitivity, making a person “super sensitive,” with “their feelings on their sleeve.”
 - This creates a snowball effect with the hurt and bitterness ever accumulating additional hurts and more bitterness, growing with every turn down the hill.
- **At a person who did not relieve a hurt.**
- **At God for allowing the hurt.**

Haman’s difficulty has thus been made deeper, and he does not even know it yet. By his attitude and his actions he has set himself against the Most High God, who as both James and Peter declare

James 4:6 God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.

And that Great God, who is Himself a loving and forgiving God when we repent of our sins and turn in faith to Him, has commanded us through His Son,

Luke 6:37 Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

But Haman will not humble himself, and Haman will not forgive Mordecai of the slight to his honor, so Haman is about to do battle with God, a battle he will most certainly lose.

In the next chapter, chapter 6, we read of the first part of the Almighty’s strategy against this proud and bitter man who opposes God’s servant.

Esther 6:1–12 1 That night the king could not sleep. So one was commanded to bring the book of the records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king.

2 And it was found written that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s eunuchs, the doorkeepers who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus.

3 Then the king said, “What honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?” And the king’s servants who attended him said, “Nothing has been done for him.”

4 So the king said, “Who is in the court?” Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king’s palace to suggest that the king hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him.

5 The king’s servants said to him, “Haman is there, standing in the court.” And the king said, “Let him come in.”

6 So Haman came in, and the king asked him, “What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honor?” Now Haman thought in his heart, “Whom would the king delight to honor more than me?”

7 And Haman answered the king, “For the man whom the king delights to honor,

8 let a royal robe be brought which the king has worn, and a horse on which the king has ridden, which has a royal crest placed on its head.

9 Then let this robe and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king’s most noble princes, that he may array the man whom the king delights to honor. Then parade him on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him: ‘Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!’ ”

10 Then the king said to Haman, “Hurry, take the robe and the horse, as you have suggested, and do so for Mordecai the Jew who sits within the king’s gate! Leave nothing undone of all that you have spoken.”

11 So Haman took the robe and the horse, arrayed Mordecai and led him on horseback through the city square, and proclaimed before him, “Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!”

12 Afterward Mordecai went back to the king’s gate. But Haman hurried to his house, mourning and with his head covered.

Oh, dear friend, don’t die the death of Haman.

Proverbs 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.

My brother and sister in Christ, do not cause deep, deep difficulty in your life. God warns us,

Heb. 12:15 looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;

Bitterness is a root, not a fruit.

- Like a root, it is often unseen.
- Like a root, other things spring from it.
- The things that spring from bitterness cause trouble.
- The things that spring from bitterness often defile (stain or pollute).

HOW DO WE WIN THE BATTLE OVER PRIDE AND BITTERNESS?

James 4:10 **Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.**

Forgive others you blame (rightfully or wrongfully) for the hurt. The issue is not whether or not they are guilty. The issue is that you have not forgiven them.

- **Purpose to be kind and tenderhearted to those you blamed.** Eph. 4:32 **And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.**
- **Go the second mile for those you blamed.** (Mt. 5:41)

Listen dear friend, I am so trying to help you. The Holy Spirit is right now trying to help you. He says in,

Psalm 51:17 **The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart— These, O God, You will not despise.**

HOW DO WE WIN THE BATTLE OVER PRIDE AND BITTERNESS?

- Humble yourself before God.
- Come with a broken and contrite heart before Him.
- Forgive those who have hurt you.
- Become kind, tenderhearted toward them.
- Go the second mile with them.