

NAVIGATING DIFFICULT TIMES

(Book of Esther)

When Evil Is Plotted Against Us

TEXT: Esther 3:1 – 4:3

INTRODUCTION: How often have I told you recently, “**America is in a mess!**”?

What happened last week in Orlando is brutal, tragic evidence of that mess. More and more Americans are waking up to the fact that our country is in serious trouble. But sadly, very few are waking up to why we are in trouble or the solution for it. **Why are we in trouble? What is the solution?**

In the providence of God, we are studying through a book of the Bible where another nation was in a mess.

We are in the book of Esther, and although this book centers on a woman by that name, men the chapter we are in this morning, chapter 3, is primarily about men. While it has a message that all of us need very much to hear regardless of our gender, there is most definitely a message here specifically to husbands and fathers.

The history recorded in this book takes place in the Empire of ancient Persia around 474 B.C.

- They have a king whose personal ungodly agenda has been costly to the nation.
- Their king’s lack of moral standards and wicked appetites have cost him his wife and cost his nation their queen.
- People in every one of the 127 provinces of the empire have been personally traumatized as some of their precious teenage girls have been abducted by the governmental agents of the king and imprisoned in his harem, destined to become his concubines and slaves for the rest of their lives.

Thus evil overflows the nation, and many are the victims of its rising tide. One of those is a Jewish man named Mordecai. Mordecai is a low level bureaucrat in the palace of wicked Ahasuerus, but he is alarmed by what is happening in his homeland because of his young cousin, whom he adopted as his own daughter when her parents both died. This young, beautiful girl was literally captured by evil along with hundreds of other lovely young girls and imprisoned in the harem of the king.

However, Mordecai is not only concerned for his cousin Esther; recent events have unveiled a threat to the hundreds of thousands of Jews now living throughout the lands controlled by Persia. There is a plot to kill every Jewish man, woman, and child living in the 127 provinces of the empire.

The plot was conceived in the mind of Haman, called Haman the Agagite. Agag had been the king of the Amalekites, who were the longtime sworn enemies of the Jews. Haman hated the Jews, all of them, and he wanted them exterminated from the kingdom. His hatred was enraged all the more whenever he came near Mordecai the Jew.

Haman was the right hand man to King Ahasuerus, while Mordecai served in a far more humble role. Whenever Haman would walk in the palace or even on the streets, people would bow before him showing him honor and inflating his ego. Everyone bowed before Haman except the king, ... and except Mordecai. Mordecai the Jew would not pay him homage, and Haman hated Mordecai and the Jews all the more because of it.

So Haman concocted a plan to destroy all of the Jews in the Kingdom of Persia in a single day. He cast lots called purim to determine the day that he would strike. The lots fell on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar. With his evil plan carefully prepared and craftily disguised, Haman took it to the king to gain his approval.

Esther 3:8–10 8 Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, “There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from all other people’s, and they do not keep the king’s laws. Therefore it is not fitting for the king to let them remain.

9 If it pleases the king, let a decree be written that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who do the work, to bring it into the king’s treasuries.”

10 So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. ...

Esther 3:12-13 12 Then the king’s scribes were called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and a decree was written according to all that Haman commanded—to the king’s satraps, to the governors who were over each province, to the officials of all people, to every province according to its script, and to every people in their language. In the name of King Ahasuerus it was written, and sealed with the king’s signet ring.

13 And the letters were sent by couriers into all the king’s provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their possessions.

My friend, this plot by wicked Haman was worse than Hitler's plan for the Holocaust. Had this plan been effected, the Jews as a people and as a nation would have been wiped out.

This was no harmful scheme with intent to wound; this was a murderous plot of death.

But let me ask you my dear American friend,

Let me interrogate you my Christian brother and sister,

Do you know that

I. EVIL IS PLOTTED AGAINST US!

As Christians

As Americans

- By Isis
- By Iran
- By Islamic terrorists

Do we need the Orlando Slaughter to convince us of this fact?

We are in danger for our lives, for our country, for our way of life!

Lt. General Michel Flynn said last week, "There are over a thousand cases currently pending against members of radical Islamist groups in all fifty of the United States of America."

EVIL IS PLOTTED AGAINST US!

But understand dear brother and sister in Christ,

We must understand better than our lost friends and neighbors and fellow Americans!

We must see more clearly than those blinded in the world can see.

The evil plotted against us does not originate with Isis, Iran, or Islamic radicals.
They have taken it up, but

THE EVIL PLOTTED AGAINST US ORIGINATES WITH SATAN, THE DEVIL HIMSELF.

He is the one that Jesus said desires to kill, to steal, and to destroy.

Listen, **what happened in Orlando was the devil's plot.** I know a radical Islamic terrorist performed the act and Isis, at the minimum, promoted, encouraged, and endorsed it, and I in no way exonerate them.

But we must look even deeper and understand that it was the evil one who puts this murderous hatred in their hearts.

And I also know that many of those who were killed, because it was a Gay Nightclub, were living a lifestyle that is an abomination to God. But listen my friend, God still loved them. God was still holding out the gift of eternal life, offering it if they would just turn in repentance and faith to Jesus who died upon the cross for their sin just as He did for your sin and for mine. God did not want them to perish; God wanted them to be saved.

This was the devil's plot, and he had at least two purposes.

1. To kill many people who were still lost in sin so that their eternal doom would be sealed.
2. To further develop an increasing sympathy for those who have chosen a gay lifestyle, and to rally the nation in support of their choice, in spite of the fact that God labels that lifestyle an abomination.

Sadly, the devil has won this battle thus far.

But the primary thing, dear brothers and sisters, you and I need to see this morning is **that same devil is plotting against you and me!**

- **He wants to murder you.** If you are lost, he wants you to die before you to turn in faith to Christ. He wants you to go to hell. If you are saved, he knows he cannot keep you from spending eternity with Christ, but he wants to end any possibility that you would lead others to trust in Jesus. He wants to kill you!
- **He wants to kill the other members of your family** for exactly the same reason.
- **He wants to steal from you.** He wants to take what God has blessed into your care for your stewardship and use. He delights in your misery.
- **He wants to destroy any good and noble thing.** He wants to destroy America because in spite of her flaws, America has been an instrument of God for good in the world, and has especially been an instrument for the propagation of the gospel. Honestly, the devil has been highly successful during our lifetimes at destroying what is good about America, and we as a nation are becoming less of an instrument for righteousness in the hands of Almighty God.

So, what do we do?

Well, we read in the Book of Esther, ...that

As soon as this evil plot to destroy the Jews was published as law there were two immediate reactions:

First, by the population in general, the people who did not know the One True and Living God. The last verse of chapter 3 says,

Esther 3:15 ...the city of Shushan was perplexed.

Another translation says, “confused.” For the people that did not know or believe in God, this proposed slaughter of the Jews was no skin off their nose; but it still did not make sense. They knew Jewish people. Yes, they were fastidious in their worship of YHWH, but YHWH’s laws commanded them be good, honest, considerate, loving people. YHWH forbade lying, stealing, murder, and adultery. The people were perplexed because they wondered, “Why kill off the good people?”

The second reaction was by the Jews, led by Mordecai.

Esther 4:1 When Mordecai learned all that had happened, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city. He cried out with a loud and bitter cry.

Esther 4:3 And in every province where the king’s command and decree arrived, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

Every chapter of the Book of Esther gives the people of God an instruction on how to navigate difficult times.

- **Chapter 1** said **when evil overflows around you, watch for God**, who is ready to intervene on behalf of His people.
- **Chapter 2** said **when evil captures you, trust in God!** Demonstrate your trust by living in meekness, knowing that God will work for, in, and through you.
- Now **Chapter 3** says, **when evil is plotted against you, cry out to God.**

II. WHEN EVIL IS PLOTTED AGAINST YOU, CRY OUT TO GOD!

And our natural inclination is to say, “**Is that all?**”

Actually, taking the whole of Scripture as our source to answer that question, that is not all, but it is first and foremost.

In some cases though, that really is all you can do. But **when it is all you can do, it is enough.**

But even when there are other things that can be done, even other things God tells us to do, crying out to God needs to be primary!

Mordecai and many other Jews recognized that nothing else would suffice if God were not in it. **Only God could protect them** from the plot of wicked Haman and the mindless approval of the king.

If God did not intervene in behalf of the Jews, they would be exterminated.

So, they cried out to God. And this was no mere passing prayer as they drove their ox cart to market.

- This was a rend your clothes kind of prayer.
- This was a clothe yourself in sackcloth kind of prayer.
- This was a put ashes on your head kind of prayer
- This was not just a get on your knees kind of prayer but a fall prostrate before God kind of prayer.
- This was a prayer with fasting, weeping, and wailing.

This was a prayer that cried out to God to say, “Lord without you, all is lost.”

Apart from you, we can do nothing!

How long has it been since you cried out to God like that?

- Not just a brief, passing prayer, “God bless me and my family, and take care of us. Amen”
- I mean getting down on your face before God and pouring out you heart in desperation.
- I mean getting alone with God and crying out for His divine intervention in your own life and then praying for His intervention in the lives of each one of your family members by name.
- How long since you lifted up the horrible offences our country is committing week after week against the Lord to say God, as an American, I’m sorry. How long since you asked God for help to withstand wickedness and evil in our culture and in the world.

Have you ever cried out to God like Mordecai cried out?

III. HUSBANDS AND FATHERS SHOULD TAKE THE LEAD IN CALLING OUT TO GOD!

Men, listen.

Mordecai put on sackcloth, fasted, wept, and prayed a long time before Esther did.

In fact, Mordecai had to persuade Esther to join him.

Mordecai wore his sackcloth and bore his ashes all over the city as a testimony that he was crying out to God.

Men, the country that we live in and love is perishing. It is rapidly dying before our eyes.

The lives of every member of each of our families is in danger.

There is no place they can go where they are not vulnerable to the plot of death that begins in the heart of the devil and is quickly adopted by willingly wicked men.

You cannot buy enough guns to ensure something won't happen.

No one can do enough surveillance for us to be sure we are safe.

The only one who can truly protect us is God.

The only one who can watch over our families sufficiently is the Lord.

The only one who can return our country to being one nation under God is Jesus.

But men, we are not being Mordecais.

We are not crying out to God

For country

Or for family

What will it take? How long will we wait?

I hope you are asking, **what can I do?**

- You can **take a few minutes a day yourself to pray for every member of your family** by name and need.
- You **can take a few minutes a day to read a little portion of God's Word** where you will be surprised what the Lord will show you as a dad that will be a help to one of those family members you prayed for.
- You can **take a few minutes at least once a week**, better every day, but at least once a week **to lead your family in prayer**, praying by name for God's protection

for each one, for God's working in the life of each one, for your family as a whole, and for your country.

- You can do what I have suggested in **less than 15 minutes a day**.
- What will it take? How long will we wait?

If Mordecai had waited until he saw the aftermath of the 13th of Adar, it would have been too late.