

NAVIGATING DIFFICULT TIMES

(Book of Esther)

Odds and God

TEXT: Esther 7:1 - 8:8

INTRODUCTION: To say that the odds seemed stacked against Esther much of her life seems like a gross understatement.

- Esther was a Jew, a race chosen by God to tell others about Him, but consequently hated by the devil and persecuted by all who are followers of the evil one.
- In addition, she was the daughter of refugee parents, still living in a foreign land.
- Those parents died, and Esther was adopted by her older cousin Mordecai.
- Esther was abducted, along with many other young women, by Persian soldiers and taken to the harem of the King Ahasuerus, who was seeking a new wife.
- Although she did not seek it, Esther was chosen by the king to become his wife and Queen, yet she could only talk to her husband or be in his presence when he sent for her. To do otherwise would be to invite death.
- Meanwhile, a wicked advisor to the king named Haman persuaded the king to enact a law that all the Jews in the empire were to be killed in a single day in the months to come.
- And if death by the end of the year were not pending disaster enough, Haman had grown a root of bitterness personally against Mordecai and built a gallows in the square in front of his own house on which to hang his Jewish enemy. He only awaited the right opportunity with the king to gain his permission for the execution.
- This is Esther's older cousin Mordecai, who sent a message to Queen Esther pleading with her to risk her own life by going to the king uninvited and asking him to spare the Jews from annihilation.
- Esther had summoned great courage and faith in God to agree to this request, and the Lord gave her favor with the king. Ahasuerus did not have her killed but asked what it was that she would request of him.
- Esther promised to reveal her desire in a banquet that she would prepare for her husband/king and the wicked mastermind of the murderous plot to kill her and all her countrymen.

- As we open the Word of God to the Book of Esther, Chapter 7, the day for the banquet has arrived. The hall is ready. The food is ready. But can this young Jewish woman persuade the evil King Ahasuerus, contrary to the council of his favorite advisor, to somehow undo the impact of a decree he has already signed and which according to the Law of the Medes and the Persians, cannot be revoked?
- Certainly the odds seem stacked against her.

Esther 7:1–8:8

1 So the king and Haman went to dine with Queen Esther.

2 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 the kingdom? It shall be done!”

3 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.

4 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.”

5 So 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?”

6 And Esther said, “The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman!” So Haman was terrified before the king and queen.

7 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.

8 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.

9 Now Harbonah, one of the eunuchs, said to the king, “Look! The gallows, fifty cubits high, which Haman made for Mordecai, who spoke good on the king’s behalf, is standing at the house of Haman.” Then the king said, “Hang him on it!”

10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king’s wrath subsided.

1 On that day King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had told how he was related to her.

2 So the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai; and Esther appointed Mordecai over the house of Haman.

3 Now Esther spoke again to the king, fell down at his feet, and implored him with tears to counteract the evil of Haman the Agagite, and the scheme which he had devised against the Jews.

4 And the king held out the golden scepter toward Esther. So Esther arose and stood before the king,

5 and said, "If it pleases the king, and if I have found favor in his sight and the thing seems right to the king and I am pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to annihilate the Jews who are in all the king's provinces.

6 For how can I endure to see the evil that will come to my people? Or how can I endure to see the destruction of my countrymen?"

7 Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and Mordecai the Jew, "Indeed, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows because he tried to lay his hand on the Jews.

8 You yourselves write a decree concerning the Jews, as you please, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's signet ring; for whatever is written in the king's name and sealed with the king's signet ring no one can revoke."

My dear friend, God's calling upon my life is to bring to you the Word of God.

- Sometimes that means instructing you in what it says.
- Sometimes it means I must bring rebuke or chastening.
- Sometimes it is a word of challenge or even command from the Lord.
- But my friend today I rejoice because that word from God's Word that I have the blessed privilege of delivering to you is a word of encouragement and of joy.

Because **there are times** in each of our lives **when it seems that the odds are just stacked against us**. There are times when it seems that there are many against us and only a very few if any are for us. Those are the times that it appears that the chances of winning can be counted on one hand but the chances of losing are numbered in the millions.

The story of Esther, and most especially this portion of the Book of Esther we just read, are for those times.

And from these precious words of God we behold great and wonderful truths.

I. THE ODDS SEEM TO BE AGAINST US BECAUSE WE CANNOT SEE EVERYTHING.

A. The servant of Elisha – 2 Kings 6:17

B. What Esther could not see:

- God had known of the devil's plot to be enacted through Haman long before Esther was ever born.
- The Almighty had determined that He would deliver His people from this threat to their very existence, not through the sword of a strong armed soldier, but through the faith and courage of a young woman, held captive against her will, in the palace of a fearsome king.
- God had arranged her adoption by her cousin Mordecai and caused them to develop a father/daughter relationship generally unknown to cousins.
- It was even God who stirred the evil heart of the king, hardened as it was by every perverse and wicked seduction known to man, to be attracted to a woman whose beauty was simple and her manner quiet.
- It was God who let Mordecai overhear the assassination plot against the king.
- It was God who let the king be awakened in the night.
- It was God who directed the fingers of the king's sleepy eyed servant to turn to the page in the chronicles that told of Mordecai's saving the life of the king.

No, Esther saw none of this. She did not know.

- She did not even know that it was God who put upon her own mind the plan to bring both the king and Haman to a banquet where she would make her request for the saving of the lives of her people.

And that is why Esther thought the odds were stacked so very severely against her.

There was so much she could not see.

Dear brother, would you remember this true account from the lives of Esther and Mordecai the next time you are nearing despair.

Dear sister in Christ, will you think about your sister in the faith named Esther who though imprisoned in a harem to be the concubine of a cruel and capricious king, was none the less the object of God's attention and affection. And that all the while she suffered with the things of the world, God was working in unseen ways in that world to use His faithful servant in such a way as to bless her, her family, and to save her nation.

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

The second truth we should note:

II. ODDS DON'T MATTER TO GOD.

He sees all.

He knows all.

He controls all.

If your fate is determined by which ball is drawn out of a bag of stones...

- Bag has 1,000 clear stones; drawing just one brings death.
- It has one blue stone that declares life, but only one out of so many.

God can look through the bag.

God knows how to draw out the one blue stone.

God can command the blue marble to float to the top and jump in your hand!

Dear Christian friend, do not despair over what is happening or going to happen to our nation.

Now hear me correctly.

- I did not say not to grieve over the sin of our people and our country. We need to weep in repentance before the Lord.
- I did not say not to pray for our nation. We cannot fall on our face too frequently in fervent prayer before God on behalf of our homeland.
- But I said, "Do not despair."
- God sees. God knows. God controls.
 - Now, I don't know what God is going to do with America.

- I am not saying He will save our nation and make everything all right.
- But God is going to do what is absolutely, perfectly right.
- God is going to do what will ultimately bless His children who have come to Him through faith in Jesus Christ.
- Whatever God does dear Christian friend, a hundred years from now, when you look back on what God did, you are going to say, “Wow! That was exactly right! That was perfect. I would have never thought things so miserable could have turned out this way.”

Odds don't matter to God.

That is also true in relationships. I don't care how unlikely it is that a broken relationship would be restored, if you take two people, and they will

- Trust the Lord
- Faithfully practice His word
- Do what God says to do
- Odds don't matter to God. He will restore that relationship.

It does not matter the nature of the hardship you face. How could you face a greater hardship than Esther faced? How could the odds be stacked against you greater than that which surrounded Esther? How could more be riding on the outcome than was riding on Esther's plea to her husband/king?

But odds don't matter to God.

God always does what He knows is right and best.

It may not be what we want or think is best, but it is. Always works the best for God's children.

Finally my friend, be encouraged to know and to believe that

III. GOD ALWAYS BEATS THE ODDS.

GOD IS IN CONTROL.

What were the odds?

- Of Noah's ark surviving a worldwide flood?
- Of Pharaoh yielding to Moses' demand?

- Of Israel escaping when trapped by the Red Sea?
- Of Gideon defeating 135,000 Midianite soldiers with 300 Israelite farmers?
- Of David, too young to be enlisted in the army, but slaying the giant Goliath with a rock and a sling?
- Of Daniel, a teenager stolen away from a defeated Jerusalem, becoming chief of the magi in the empire of Babylon?
- Or of Esther, woman, refugee, orphan, captive, condemned, ignored, isolated, being the one who would save the Jewish people from total annihilation?

But she did, not because of her, but because of God. God always beats the odds!

He will beat the odds against you as well if you will trust Him, if you will obey Him, if you will follow Him.

CONCLUSION: Stand with me and bow your heads in prayer.

Are the odds stacked against you right now? Even while I am speaking or in a moment when I pray, I invite you to slip down to the altar and get on your knees with God. Declare what you are up against, and then tell God, no matter what, you trust Him.

- The odds don't matter. You know there are things He sees you cannot see, things He knows you do not know. Declare to God that you know He controls all things.
- Tell Him you trust Him. You will obey Him. You will follow Him.
- I am not saying God will do what you want; but I promise you God will do what is right and good and best for every child of His.