

# NAVIGATING DIFFICULT TIMES

## (Book of Esther)

### Ask the King

TEXT: Esther 8:1-17

INTRODUCTION: Studying through the Book of Esther has been a great blessing to me personally, so much so that I hate to see it end. However, we will complete our study in this wonderful portion of God's Word next week.

Some of you have told me that you did not realize there was so much in the Book of Esther, and I tell you, neither did I! For while many of you have spent maybe 45 minutes each week in a chapter of this book, I have spent eight to ten hours in each chapter, and have sometimes found it difficult to narrow down the content to try to bring you a message that fits in the timeframe of our worship.

**In the midst of the overwhelming hardships** that came upon the life of this young Jewish woman, I have delighted to see how **Esther** responded to the working of God in, through, and around her life.

- When evil was abounding in the nation that was her home, she **watched for God**.
- When she herself was personally captured by that evil and forced into sexual slavery, she nonetheless **trusted God**.
- When Esther discovered that not only was slavery her fate but that she and all of her fellow Jews were destined for destruction, she **cried out to God**.
- Suddenly and most unexpectedly, Esther found herself in the middle of the battle for the salvation of the life of her people, and Esther yielded her own instinct of self-preservation and **obeyed God**.
- As things went from bad to worse, Esther **discovered that faith sustains the faithful**.
- And even when it seemed that the odds were irreparably stacked against her and the people she longed to rescue from death, she **saw that** the odds don't matter to **God; He is still in control**.

As we come to chapter 8 in the Book of Esther, we are tempted to breathe a sigh of relief and say, "At last Esther,

- your faith is rewarded.
- God has acted.

- Your obedience has produced fruit.
- And all is well in your world.”

But my friend, all is not yet well. Chapter 8 opens while Esther and the King are still in the Banquet Hall. Now much has happened.

- The King has now seen Haman for the arrogant, conniving, bitter, murderous, rat he was.
- The king sent Haman to the gallows Haman had built for the hanging of Mordecai, Esther’s cousin and adoptive father, and Haman has been hanged upon it.
- And in the early verses of chapter 8 with which we concluded our study last week, King Ahasuerus even gave the house and vast estate of Haman to Esther, and Esther made Mordecai the Estate Manager.
- And in fact, the king appointed Mordecai to become his primary advisor in place of the wicked Haman.

So, why would I say that all is not well?

Because **the decree that the enemies of the Jews may murder them** – men, women, children alike – on the thirteenth day of Adar, the last month of the year – this decree **was still written into the Laws of the Medes and the Persians**, which could not be revoked.

In fact, this decree had already been sent by courier through the extensive postal system of the Persian Empire, and the notice that the government of Persia would sanction the wholesale slaughter of these people within her borders because of their ethnicity and national origin. This decree of death was already published in the 127 provinces of the empire!

- Wicked Haman is dead!
- Esther has been made rich!
- Mordecai has become the right hand man to the King of Persia!
  - But God’s people are still doomed.
  - The prayers of all the Jews are yet unanswered.
  - The purpose for which God raised up Esther for such a time as this is not yet realized.
  - God’s rescue of His people has not yet been accomplished.

This fact has not escaped Esther. In spite of all the good that has happened in the last hour that has been for her good and, no doubt, to her relief, she knows that her people are still condemned. The law still says that they may be annihilated.

**So what should she do?**

My friend, the answer to that question is not merely academic for us.

There is a decree in our own country enacted by our Supreme Court that sanctions the murder of little babies as long as they still reside in the womb of their mother. More than 3,000 a day are still being killed in the United States of America.

- In June we mourned the death of 50 people gunned down in Orlando, and rightly so.
- Three weeks ago we grieved with our nation over the death of two black men and five police officers, and again, rightly so.
- But where is the anguish of our nation for the 600,000 little ones killed within our land this year?
- Where are the tears of the righteous, where is our grief for the loss of the lives of 59 million people, whose lives have been taken by the decree of legalized murder that continues in the legal system of the United States of America?
- Friend, I know. I struggle with it as much as you.
  - It has been a part of our lives for so long,
  - and the death toll has been so overwhelming,
  - and the thought of it to every godly person so utterly devastating and heartbreaking,
  - that we do not allow ourselves to think about it too often.

But we at least need to think about it sometimes.

What if Esther had forgotten? What if Esther had gotten so caught up in the fact that

- Haman was dead and gone
- And she was rich
- And Mordecai was powerful

What if Esther had forgot that in just a little while her fellow Jews would be mercilessly killed?

Neither can we afford to forget. We must not forget!

So Esther said to herself, **“What can I do?”**

We must join her to ask, “What can I do?”

And then Esther remembered what God had told her to do in the first place. God had sent her to ask the king. He had sent her to appeal to the king to spare her life as a Jew and the lives of her people scattered throughout the empire that Haman had conspired to destroy.

At the time, God’s instruction seemed almost absurd.

- Though anointed Queen, the King had not called for her in a month’s time.
- Haman had far more influence and favor with the King than she did.
- Haman was with him every day, several times a day!
- Why should the King care?
- He himself was wicked and cruel and capricious and proud, just like Haman.
- And he had plenty of other concubines.

But God had impressed upon her heart that the message from Mordecai that she herself must go and ask the King was a message from God. She had fasted and prayed over it. She had cried out to God and He had answered her. She knew that was what she was supposed to do so clearly that she was willing to risk her own life in the doing of it.

So she had! She had gone to the king and had asked him to spare her life and the lives of her people.

But the king had given her no answer to her request. He had gotten caught up with Haman’s trickery and scheming and had taken care of that, but the request had been forgotten.

So we come to chapter 8, verse 3.

**Esther 8:3–6 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?"

And my friend, do you know what happened? The King said to Esther and to Mordecai

Esther 8:8 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."

That's right. The King said, "Write it yourselves! Whatever works! Protect your people. Keep them from being harmed. It will be as if I dictated the words myself."

You may ask, "What happened? Did the king get saved? Did he become a believer? Did he repent and his life transformed?"

And the answer is no. None of that. Neither the text of Esther nor secular history would offer any testimony to the conversion of King Ahasuerus of Persia.

So what happened? Here is what happened:

Proverbs 21:1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.

- As God turned the heart of Cyrus to let the remnant of the Jews rebuild the walls of Jerusalem,
- As God turned the heart of King Artaxerxes to let Nehemiah return to Jerusalem to oversee the construction of the city,
- As God would turn the heart of Pontus Pilate to leave the placard above the Cross of Christ unchanged declaring for all to see, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews,"
- So also God turned the heart of King Ahasuerus to spare the lives of God's chosen people.

Proverbs 21:1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.

Dear brother and sister, we must not forget this.

I admit that I myself am prone to forget this and to give up on our president. And I will tell you that I believe President Obama has proven himself to be a vile and wicked man.

- But he is not more wicked than King Ahasuerus was.

- He is not more wicked than Pontus Pilate was.
- And God can still turn his heart.

And we need to ask the king. In whatever way we have at our disposal: through letters, emails, though contact with our other elected representatives.

We need to ask the king, not because we have confidence in the king; but because we have confidence in God!

And dear brother and sister, this principle is not just when lives are in danger. This principle is for any good, godly, righteous request.

God has established multiple authorities in our lives. The Bible says those authorities are appointed by Him. Therefore, when we need something good and righteous done that we ourselves do not have the power to do, we are to ask the one in authority in that area. Ask the king!

You have a hardship at work that is just not right? Ask the king, the boss, at work! The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord.

You have a problem at school, go to the king or queen of the school. Appeal to your teacher. Appeal to your Assistant Principal in charge. Appeal to the Principal of the school. Ask the king. The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord.

Now let me tell you something else this tells us.

### **We need to ask the King of Kings.**

Ultimately, every king of every country answers to this King!

- **Every authority is subject to the King of Kings.**
- **He rules over the affairs of men.**
- **He is in control.**
- **He turns the hearts of lesser kings.**

And He is always righteous. He always desires what is good. And He always hears the prayers of His children.

We need to ask the King!

As James says, "Sometimes we have not because we ask not."

Jesus said,

**Matthew 7:7**

**“Ask, and it will be given to you;**

**seek, and you will find;**

**knock, and it will be opened to you.**

CONCLUSION: The message of God’s Word to us today is abundantly clear and exceedingly simple.

**It is God who has put kings and other authorities in places of power.**

**When righteousness is not being done,**

- **Ask the king or leader to do what is right.**
- **Ask the KING OF KINGS to turn the hearts of human kings or to overrule them to establish righteousness.**

**PRAYER**

Forgive us because we have often given up on leaders and failed to ask.

Forgive us because we have not often enough come to You to ask.

But God we are asking now. (And even now, if you want to slip down to the altar and get on your knees as we ask God, as we appeal to Him for righteousness in our nation, in our state, our city, our schools, our workplaces, you come on down to pray.)

- Pray for our President. We ask You to turn his heart toward You. We ask that You would break his heart over the slaughter of the unborn which he has continued and promoted. We pray that You would turn his heart to righteousness concerning human sexuality, marriage, justice, and freedom.
- We pray for the candidates who desire to become our next President, and we ask the same for them.
- Lord where people are experiencing oppression, persecution, injustice in the workplace, we pray for You to turn the hearts of those who reign as kings and queens over those jobs.
- We pray for You to turn the hearts of those in authority in our schools and establish righteousness for teachers and students alike.
- And Lord as we pray for righteousness in these areas of life around us, we ask You to help us desire righteousness inside of our own lives and homes that we might honor, please, and serve You.