

Studies in Esther 2

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[0 : 00] Well now friends, it's really with a twinge of sorrow that I'm here this afternoon because I wish this could be coming on for a week.

It's the fellowship that is so greatly appreciated at the meal table. Being able to talk on spiritual things and not things that are just going to be blown away.

And again I want to thank the powers that be for so very graciously allowing me to come and be among you. And I'll long remember the fellowship that I've had with so many of you.

I did wonder when I came with my good friend and we both got up whether somebody would say, Well at least these two men are scriptural because in the book of God it says, And there were in the last days giants, the sons of Anah.

I do want to pay my tribute. Living in Ireland, this has been a really international conference.

[1 : 13] I'm an Englishman, I'm a Jew, Welshman, Scotsman and I think rather we represent Ireland. We're two missionaries living in Ireland to the Irish.

And I shall very much remember the powers that be that if in the providence of God you meet again, that the Lord will give you a strength of blessing to those who come as you've given to us.

Now I'd like us to turn to the book of Esther and we're going to read from chapter 4. Chapter 4. There was a book of Hebrews 3.

Modicai, to see all that was done, I hope everyone can hear. Modicai rent his clothes, put on sackcloth with ashes, went out into the midst of the city and cried with a loud and bitter cry.

And came even before the king's gate, for none might enter into the king's gate, closed with sackcloth. And in every province whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews and fasting and weeping and wailing and many lay in sackcloth and ashes. So Esther's maids and her chamberlains came and told it her. Then was the queen exceedingly grieved and she sent Raymond to clothe Mordecai and to take away his sackcloth from him, but he received it not. Then Esther called for Hethach, one of the king's chamberlains, whom he had appointed to attend upon her and gave him a commandment to Mordecai to know what it was and why it was. So Hethach went forth to Mordecai into the streets of the city which was before the king's gate. Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him and of the sum of the money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the Jews to destroy them. He gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them to show it unto

[3 : 45] Esther, to declare it unto her and to charge her that she should go in unto the king to make supplication unto him and to make requests before him for her people. Hethach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai, again Esther spake unto Hethach and gave him commandment unto Mordecai, all the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces do know that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden scepter that he may live. But I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days. And they talked to Mordecai, Esther's words.

Then Mordecai, I commanded to answer Esther, think not with thyself, that thou shalt escape in the king's house more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall their enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, that thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed. And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time of peace?

Then Esther bade them return, Mordecai, this answer. Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and ask ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days night or day. I also and

my maidens will fast likewise.

And so I will go in unto the king, which is not according to the law. And if I perish, I perish.

So Mordecai went his way and did according to all that Esther had commanded him. May God bless that wonderful portion from his own eternal word of truth.

[6 : 20] I greatly appreciated the whole service and especially God's message this morning. One thing that made me think was the emphasis on the father.

And I don't know what the ladies were thinking about, but your turn has come this afternoon because we're going to turn from the father to the woman, to Esther.

I was reading a book recently, and this is the quotation I got from it. God is preparing his heroes and his heroines, and when the time comes, the world will wonder where they came from.

Have you noticed that in the scriptures? The most unlikely people, God was getting ready for his will and purpose to be fulfilled.

Who would have ever thought that Egypt would be saved famine by Joseph in prison? What was God doing?

[7 : 41] Preparing Ezekiel and Daniel in Babylon. Preparing Nehemiah in Susa.

And right through the scriptures, God is ever preparing those that later he's going to call on. So first of all, I want us to look at chapter 4, in which I've entitled A Day of Decision.

Fifteen million Jews were in the Persian Empire, and the whole of them were facing death. We go back for a moment to yesterday.

The king had signed the letter, and the law of the Medes and Persians could not be changed. And the nation were facing annihilation, a death.

Their own land was under the rule of Ahasuerus. For as we said yesterday, this despot ruled from India to Ethiopia, secluded in the harem of the king's women with Esther.

[9 : 14] And we begin this chapter not with Esther, but with her guardian, Mordecai. when Mordecai perceived all that was done, he rent his clothes, he put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and bitter cry.

I think it was Edmund Burke who said, all that is required for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.

How often when tragedy comes we stand aloof to it. At the breakfast table this morning we were talking together about the evils that are in our world.

What are we doing about the evils in our world? Mordecai immediately faced up to the issue of the slaughter of his own kith and king.

And you notice what he did. He put on sackcloth and ashes which was completely contrary to the whole reign of Ahasuerus.

[10 : 32] Because where was he? Now you've got to get this in its focus. He was at the gate of the king. And if the king came out and saw this man in sackcloth off with his head.

There was no fear in Mordecai. He had to face up to the situation at hand. And beloved friends so often when you and I come up against things.

Or we're wanting some decision. We go from person to person person to person. Mordecai went to his God. He took the attitude there's nobody that can give me any help but the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

And there he sits in sackcloth. Do you remember Nehemiah was in the same situation? He was the king's cupbearer.

Now I had not been before time sad in his presence. Wherefore the king said unto me, why is thy countenance sad? because my city lies in ruins.

[11 : 56] He couldn't keep his sadness away from the pagan king. And friend, when we look over our sin swept world, is there sadness?

are we in sackcloth and ashes over the sin that blights the world today? Truth forever on the scaffold.

Nehemiah could not keep his emotions under. They were there. Ezra went into sackcloth and ashes because of the backsliding and the intermarrying that was going on among Israel.

When you and I have to face up to sorrow and trouble, we don't need to go to other people. We go to our God. We go to our Father, the one who is ever touched with the feeling of our infirmity.

Now remember this. Here's Mordecai. he's sitting at the king's gate. He's as near to the palace because remember the palace was out of bounds.

[13:19] Nobody dare go into that palace. The king reigned in total seclusion. So how can he get the news to Esther?

Esther was in the Harim and a man dare not go there. So he needed an in-between. He needed an intermediary.

And who is the intermediary? Hetak. For Hetak could go into the place where the women were. And Mordecai in this chapter goes to Hetak and tells you must let Esther know but disaster is facing us. And so Hetak in this chapter goes and tells the queen your guardian is in sackcloth and he's in tears and he looks shattered.

Why? Why? And imagine Esther the queen of the realm having to get this through an intermediary.

[14:40] And the queen is told Can Esther get out of this? And Hetak again reminds me you see that how often God uses obscure people to further his providence.

there are certain people in the holy scriptures that I call unknown people. Nobody has ever told me the name of the little boy who gave the loaves and fishes to the redeemer.

Nobody has told me of those valiant men who let Paul over a basket over the wall enter freedom.

These obscure people, people we never dream of have been used in the eternal purpose of God. And in verses 10 to 14 the message comes to Esther. All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces do know that whosoever whether man or woman shall come unto the king and to the inner court who is not court is to be put to death.

Am I wrong when I surmise and say that Esther was saying I cannot do this. I'm the queen of the realm. How can I go against the law of my sovereign king?

[16:21] I've been very impressed with the addresses on Job. Job. It's given me a completely different idea in certain matters on Job. And you know friends we can become very very hard on people.

I find it dreadfully hard not to digress when I'm speaking. I'm sort of like a volcano. It sort of bubbles up all the time. You know we're dreadfully down on Peter because when in the upper room our Lord Jesus comes to Peter and says Peter I want to wash your feet.

And Peter says no Lord. And we get very upset with Peter. No friend wait a moment. I know what Peter was getting at.

Because very quickly in the days that Peter lived there were four slaves. The book of the Psalms reminds us of the master as the eyes of a handmaid are upon her mistress as the eyes of the slave are upon the master.

The one looked after the master the one looked after the queen or the lady of the house and the slave wasn't allowed to talk one word.

[17:34] Galatians introduces us to the third slave wherefore the law was our pedagogue our slave the one who had the discipline and I can assure you in the days of Paul there was no such man to splut.

It was rigid discipline. What was making Peter so annoyed? There was a fourth slave and you know what he did? His only duty was to go door to door washing the feet of people and the other three slaves wouldn't deign to do it.

And Peter thinks my Messiah, my Redeemer, he's the fourth slave, no, but Peter must have learned later if he'd read Paul's letter to the Philippians, he made himself of no reputation.

And so I come back to Esther having digressed for a moment. And here she is in the court of the women in the Harim and she says, this is an impossible task because if I go and look, it's 30 days since I've seen the king.

And then her guardian comes onto the scene again. And her guardian makes her face up to her responsibility.

[19:00] Oh, friend, we who love our blessed Lord sometimes avoid our responsibility. And Esther on this occasion was trying to avoid her responsibility.

responsibility. And so her guardian sends a message through Hater. Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house more than all the Jews.

Esther, you're Yiddish. You're Jewish. And if the edict is carried on, whether you're the queen or not, you know, it reminds me of Nazi Germany.

Do you know that a lot of Jewish people had been baptized, not on conviction, but to get away from Jewishness. But when Hitler came along, we're not Jews, we belong to the Lutheran church.

You're Jews. Ouch, this. And Mordecai is saying, look, don't rest upon the fact because you're the queen. You are Jewish. Jewish. And if that edict is carried out, you will be as dead as I am.

[20 : 15] Face up to your responsibility, Esther. And then you get those magnificent words of Mordecai. If thou holdest thy peace at this time, there shall enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place.

Now, wait a moment. I said yesterday, the name of the eternal God is not mentioned. Now, what's Mordecai getting at? Where he says, if you hold your peace, deliverance will come from another place.

Am I reading in something that isn't there? I hope not. I believe that Mordecai's faith and trust was in the God of his fathers. If you, Esther, avoid your responsibility, the God of our fathers will see us through.

Some trust in chariots and some in horses. But our trust is in the name of the Lord. I believe that Mordecai was doing this because he loved the one that he was trying to be guardian to.

He knew what he was going through. But in this case, responsibility had to be faced up to.

[21 : 42] And oh beloved in Christ, remember, and I'm specially speaking to any of you young people, my days are nearly done. In the providence of God, life is before you.

Oh, I plead with you young people, remember, your responsibility is not just to your fellow man, your responsibility is to your God. It must be God first.

When it comes to marriage, it's God first, not your inclination first. For let me say this very bluntly, God has no time and no use for the unequal yoke.

My responsibility as well as yours is to the blessed Lord who redeemed me by his own divine grace.

Now the message comes back to Esther. Then Esther bade them return, Mordecai, this answer.

And you notice it's a very gracious one.

[23 : 01] Oh dear me, every time you pick up a newspaper or turn, it's protest, protest. There's no protest. Mordecai wasn't protesting. And neither was Esther.

Because look what she says to her cousin, to Mordecai. Gather all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink.

Three days I also and my maidens will fast likewise. And so I will go in unto the king. Do you see? Do you see a wonderful thought there? I've got to get before my god before I can get back to the king. It's no panic stations.

My maidens and myself are going to fast these three days. We're going to get on our faces before God. And then knowing that I'm in the will of God, I will go in to the king.

[24 : 10] And she knows what she's doing because let me finish the verse. And I wonder how many of us could say what she did and if I perish I perish.

You know friends when I was thinking of this you know how my mind went to? Do you remember that lovely word of Paul in the letter to the Romans?

He's thinking of his own people. How Paul loved his people. I could wish that I was separated from Christ for my brothers.

What an expression. The man who said for me to live is Christ says I'm willing to be parted from my Saviour if I perish.

I perish. How many of us could honestly say this before our God? that when it comes to a witness to the outside world you in this fair land have examples of this.

[25 : 27] Wasn't that the word of the Covenanters? If I perish I perish. They didn't perish for an earthly thing.

They perished for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. And so the message gets back.

And Esther in that 17th verse says that she's going and she's agreed to intercede on behalf of her people to the king.

Here it's an interesting factor. In our western civilization we keep a very tight rope on our emotions. In the Middle East perhaps you've seen it on television folk who were born and bred in the Middle East give reign to their emotion.

Mordecai did not go into where he dwelt. He was there where everybody could see him in his sackcloth and ashes and weeping over the imminent destruction of his own people.

[26 : 52] I come back to Hater. In the providence of God Hater was reliable and he could be clustered.

So we've seen Esther's reply. She's going before her God with her maidens to seek the guidance that he alone could give her.

before we leave this chapter I want to go back very briefly to verse 14.

If you hold your peace deliverance will come to the Jews from another place. I came into the mission in 1934.

To save any embarrassment I'm not going to ask all who remember that year to stand because we probably would be very much in the minority. It was so difficult to get people to see the need of bringing Jewish people to Christ.

[28:12] Now I want to labor on this a moment. why do you want to preach the gospel to the Jew? In the tail end of the last century a young Jewish man in Russia was seeking truth.

He'd been brought up in a very orthodox Jewish community and he went into an orthodox Russian church. He got no higher than the top step.

The two men came and they said filthy Jews are not allowed here and threw him down the whole length of the stone stairway. Do you know who that was?

Karl Marx. if you hold your peace deliverance is going to come from another place and it did. It came through communism and not Christ.

Oh friends those of us who have been redeemed by sovereign grace we have a tremendous responsibility to those who are without. in Ezekiel you have and I will require their blood at your hands.

[29:43] If you hold your peace if Esther had held her peace what would have happened the whole nation apart from divine intervention would have been utterly annihilated.

We have to go on. And the next chapter introduced at least chapter I've got to skip chapter 5 for a moment and go to chapter 6. Here we see King Ahasuerus suffering from quite a common complaint insomnia.

On that night the king could not sleep and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles and they were read before the king.

I wonder what those commands were. I wonder why the king on that night had insomnia because it seems to me that that insomnia was within the purpose and plan of God.

It was in all probability that he began to read the history of Israel. He began to see what happened to Pharaoh.

[31:09] He began to see what happened to old king of Bashan and he couldn't sleep. He had written the edict destroy this nation.

I am quite convinced that those opening verses are within the compass of God's sovereignty because it seems to me that from this chapter onwards the tide turns.

The king couldn't sleep. He goes into history and he sees what the oppressors of Israel have met with. Not from man but from this God that Mordecai and Esther came from.

How often this has happened in the history of biblical characters. divine intervention. They were having the feast and suddenly right across the walls you are weighed in the balances and you are found wanting.

Daniel is in the den of lions and he is alive. Divine intervention and even those pagan heathen kings are made to think. that's a very brief episode.

[32:39] And again remember this before we go any further and we go back to Esther because we are going from one to the other unfortunately. I'm going back now to Esther.

She and her maids are fasting. What a composite picture because really you see Esther was used in the royal palace to feasting not fasting.

and what would others be thinking what is the queen fasting for? And so we come very briefly to chapter 5.

Esther enters the presence of the king in fear and in trembling. I've come here a moment.

I love that word in the letter to the Hebrews having therefore brethren boldness to enter into the holiest of all not like Aaron.

[33:42] When Aaron on Yom Kippur when Aaron on the day of atonement went in it was with fear and trembling and the people wondered whether the holiness of God had devoured their high priest.

now she enters the presence of the king in real fear.

Am I doomed? Is that golden scepter going to be put out to me? She puts on her royal robes. She's had to take off the sackcloth and ashes because she's got a privileged status.

She's the king's consort. And it came to pass on the third day that Esther put on her royal apparel and stood in the inner court of the king's house.

And it was so when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court that she obtained favour in his sight.

[34 : 50] And the king held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. What a beautiful picture. Oh friend, to think that we sinners have found favour in the sight of the holiness of God, not because of ourselves, but through the justifying grace of our blessed Redeemer.

That we can make our approach to the most holy, the holy place, because one has gone before us. Boldness to enter into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus.

And so the golden scepter is held out to her. And notice that the king puts a question to her. The king said, What wilt thou queen, Esther?

And what is thy request? It shall be given thee to the half of the kingdom. And what is her request? And Esther answered, if it seemed good unto the king, Let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him.

Then the king said, Cause Haman to make haste, that he may do as Esther has said. Not I have said it, my queen has said it. You notice the royalty, the king whose word was law and order, says, The queen has invited Haman to the banquet.

[36 : 33] So the queen, the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

Studying this I was really perplexed. What was Esther up to? Putting it a bit crudely, her guardian had already told her that Haman had got the decree through for the destruction of her people.

And now she says to the queen, I'd like Haman to come to a feast. Ah, but wait a moment. The providential finger of God's over Esther now.

It isn't Esther scheming, it's the providential purpose of God that's at work. Haman, of course, thinks this is wonderful.

Then went forth, verse 9, Haman that day with a glad heart. And then his heart sunk. But when he saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai.

[37 : 49] His pride was really stabbed. And yet there was a tremendous joy in Haman's heart. the queen has invited me to her banquet.

And then Haman gets on the road of boasting. You notice that? He told them of the glory of his riches, the multitude of his children, all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and the servants of the king.

Moreover, he says, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared, but myself. Haman strutting like a peacock, full of his own ego, boasting of the riches and everything that he possessed.

Esther didn't know the sanity of the book of the Proverbs. Pride goes before a fall, and so does a haughty spirit. Is it no wonder that Paul, that gracious man of God, said, God forbid that I should boast saved in the death of my Lord Jesus Christ.

Oh, friend, I speak to my own heart as dwellest to you. It's not the riches of the world, it's not the important people.

[39 : 26] We have only one thing to boast of in this gathering this afternoon. The sovereign grace reached out to us, took us in our sinful condition, and redeemed us, and made us what we are this afternoon.

home. And so, they have the banquet. Haman and Zeresh are delighted.

It's only a matter of time before this pestilential fellow at Mordecai is on the gallows, and I'm going to make the gallows very high, says Haman, so that the whole kingdom shall see this man that I hate from the bottom of my heart.

Esther's found favor. The king gives her the desire, and in chapter 7, which we go to very briefly, you have Esther's entreaty for her people.

So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen, and the king said unto Esther on the second day at the banquet of wine, what is thy petition?

[40 : 48] Or he's given her one petition, but what is this second position? And it should be granted thee, what is thy request? And I love the way Esther approaches her sovereign, if I have found favor in thy sight, and if it please the king, how rude we can be sometimes, how brash we can be, include myself.

Esther goes into the, he's the queen of the realm, she's the top woman in the realm, but she doesn't take liberties with the king. This is something that utterly disgusts me in the generation I live, the way they talk of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, taking liberties with him, as if he's a merely mortal being.

Esther says, if it pleases the king, let my life, be given me at my petition, and then she really comes out and my people, at my request, you see what she's doing, she's identifying herself with her people.

She's forgotten for the moment she's the queen, she's a child of Abraham, a child of Isaac, a child of Jacob. And what a wonderful increase, for we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, to perish.

If we'd been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I'd held my tongue, although the enemy would not count it, they would. The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman.

[42 : 44] She's come right out now, no fear, the king's given her favour, the golden scepter's there, and she says, here, my lord, is the man who's engineered this vile plot, to annihilate the nation that my guardian I belong to.

She's faced up to the 14th verse of the fourth chapter. she's quite willing, because she's already said, if I perish, I perish. And the king listens.

And what I want you to remember this afternoon is this, the king of Persia, the law cannot be changed. What's he done?

He's signed the letter that is the death blow of the nation of Israel. now he's got to countersign it. And he makes no excuse to Esther.

Then, the king rising from the banquet of wine stood up in the palace garden.

[44 : 00] Haman, boastful, bragging Haman, is now trembling with fear. The man who thought that he could rule and go against the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, now comes to Esther and pleads with Esther for his life.

Oh, beloved friends, can't you see the providence of God? Can't you see how God completely turns the tables? What was an utter disaster is no longer a disaster because remember this in life, we talk so much about circumstances.

There are no circumstances with God for God is the God of circumstances. The king returned. He must have been pacing up and down like an angry lion. How dare he subject his queen to death and he returns and there is the most vile man lying on the bed with Esther, with the queen of the realm.

Can you see God at work? Can you see God at work? The king returns and when he saw this dreadful thing he says cover the man's face behead and get rid of him and kill him.

[45 : 31] and the man who thought that he could bring the destruction of God's people to pass is no longer led on the streets on a white horse but he's led a man to the execution.

The mills of God grind slow but they grind exceeding shore. And I believe before we finish there is a tremendous lesson for us here.

How often we humans because although we've been redeemed by sovereign grace we're humans how often instead of looking to the providence of God we look to our circumstances Esther had looked at her circumstances and she had quaked because of the circumstances and the God of her father reminds her I'm the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob and so the wicked Haman meets the death not merely at the hands of Ahasuerus and you can entitle chapter 7 if you like disaster turning to triumph and Haman gets his due reward very quickly chapter 8 on that day did the king give the house of

Haman the Jews enemy unto Esther the queen and here's her third request verse 3 of chapter 8 and Esther spake yet again before the king and fell down at his feet and besought him with tears this was a dreadful thing for a queen to do in the presence of her monarch and why was she in tears oh she says my monarch put away the mischief of Haman and his device then the king held out the golden scepter toward Esther and the whole of that chapter is given over to a has you hear us seeing the tables turned vacant places filled instead of

Mordecai being at the king's gate he's now allowed in the palace he's the chief man my time has gone when you read the latter chapters do you see what happens the nation are in joy and they're sending poor that's why it's called poor poor is presence they're sending presence to one another and if you can at your leisure read the latter chapters you know what's happening many of the Persians asked to become Jews according to the Jewish religion proselytes if you like the fear of

Mordecai had come upon the Persian nation very quickly I want to link this with Romans 11 if by any means

[49 : 18] I might provoke to jealousy them that are my people and Paul goes on but I want to revert back to Zechariah for a moment remember that verse in Zechariah it shall come to pass in those days that ten men out of all nations of the earth shall say come with us for we have heard that God is with you imagine these proud Persians are so overwhelmed by the prominence of God through Mordecai and surely we can use this as a parable of the nation of Israel what shall the ingathering of them be but life from the dead oh friends as we finish these brief studies the whole of

Esther points me to the providence of God his wonderful dealings and all I would say to you is fellowship is a wonderful thing but when it comes to decision there is only one face that we have to seek and that is the face of the one who will ever lead us ever guide us never leave us and never forsake us let us pray most gracious God forgive us God forgive us that we so often doubt thy providence that we so often make up our own accord do not seek thy face oh blessed Lord thou hast shown us through this wonderful book of history that thou art from eternity to eternity from everlasting to everlasting thou art God ever working out thy plans putting putting aside those who would hinder thy purposes and plans oh Lord grant that we may by thy divine grace face up to our responsibility thee and how we bless thee that when we go into the presence of the most high the golden scepter of justifying grace is ever held out to us bidding us welcome because of the one who loved us and who gave himself for us our blessed redeemer and savior amen people somewhere lives even

L lerdale o l l el L lerdal o l l l To be courageous.

to be divorced! I never thought for such a rut A tloha sta dista l gara l gara l gara l gara

[54 : 40] l gara l gara l gara l gara l gara l gara l gara l gara l gara l gara God k ■■■■ ■■■■

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Hi Oh I Thank you.