

Esther 06-03-28B

We pick up our study here in Esther chapter 4. Xenophon said, *Ati utodeta krusun skakdron*. Guess what that means? It is not the golden scepter that saves the kingdom, but faithful friends are the truest and best scepter of the kingdom. I didn't give you all the Greek for that, but this is the famous saying that lets us know that way back in the days of Cyrus, they had a golden scepter.

And Cyrus talking to his son, Cambyses, as recorded by Xenophon, that's what he said. *Ati utodeta krusun skakdron tamon basileon diasnon ehten alehoi poistoi philoi skakdron basileuson*, etc., etc. It just sounds like Greek to you, doesn't it? That's what it is.

Well, there is an element of truth, though, in this saying. It's not the golden scepter that saves the kingdom. Faithful friends are the truest and best scepter of the kingdom.

If you have faithful friends, you don't have to worry about who's coming into the throne room trying to assassinate you. By the way, being the good chip off the old block that Elizabeth is, she corrected me. Ehud did not flee out the window.

He fled off the porch. So, thank you, my dear. No, listen, I'm a stickler for accuracy, and if he didn't go out the window, he didn't go out the window.

He went off the porch, locked the doors behind him, and the servants were embarrassed to go back in and check for the king until long after Ehud had made his left-handed escape. Well, we're back here trying to figure out what's going on. Esther has sent this message to Mordecai saying, What this? Why this? Mordecai has filled her in and given her a copy of the decree.

Now Esther fully understands, and she says, Look, if I try to go into the king, I am taking my life into my hands. Mordecai comes back and says, Look, your life is forfeit unless you go in to see the king. God's going to deliver the people either with you or without you.

The question is, what's going to happen to you? And this is the point of our first lesson. I didn't quite squeeze it in before the break, but that's the whole point. Think about it.

Are you facing challenges? Are you facing circumstances? Are you having to make decisions? Hither and yon. What does this story remind us of? What is the timeless biblical principle here? The issue is really not how the problem gets resolved. God is going to resolve problems.

Life is going to move forward no matter what. And we're probably going to live over it. The question is, what are you and I going to do? How are we going to measure up? What is God going to think of us in the process of navigating these daily circumstances? Five years ago today, all of us were in some kind of a circumstance.

All of us were facing some kind of a challenge. All of us had some areas of things going pretty good. And we were thinking thoughts and making decisions.

And guess what? Every single one of us made it through today. We're all still here. Now, whatever the problems were, whatever the challenges were, some kind of way they got solved.

We're still alive. We're still upright, breathing good air. The question is not what kind of a problem got solved.

The question is, how did you and I think? Were we operating in faith five years ago or three years ago or two years ago? What about today? And most particularly, what about tomorrow and the next day? Mordecai is still teaching Esther. He is still, as they like to say, mentoring her. Nothing like taking a good noun and making a verb out of it, right? He is still endeavoring to teach her and to bring her along in the faith.

And he says, look, don't worry about God delivering the people. He's going to deliver the people. And we reviewed the timing during the break of where we are in the history of Israel.

The temple and Jerusalem fell in 586 B.C. Daniel, reading Jeremiah, knew that that would last for 70 years. So, the official end of the captivity is 516 B.C. There are decrees that go forth even before that. Cyrus' first decree is before that in like 538 B.C. The second decree that allows people to go back and do some more things in Jerusalem is about 520 B.C. The third and fourth decrees, the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem is still future to Esther.

That decree hasn't gone out yet. It's another 30 years or so before that decree is going to come out. But, people have filtered back to the land, right? And all of these promises that God has made, even though you're scattered to the nations, I will regather you.

Though I may destroy all of these other nations, I will never destroy you. Mordecai knows those promises. Now, if Haman has his way, how many Jews are going to survive? Zero.

You say, but there's some that went back to the land. Well, the land is a Persian province. And the law is going to be executed there just like everywhere else.

And the Jews are going to be executed there just like everywhere else. So, Mordecai says, look, if you aren't the instrument by which God delivers, somebody else is going to do it. Now, if you don't hear anything else I say tonight, hear this.

People are eligible for God's salvation, right? Every human being that is capable of rational thought and is accountable for their decisions is eligible for salvation, right? Suppose one of these people is your friend. And you know the truth of the Gospel and you know who Jesus Christ is, but for whatever reason, you never tell them. There are vast, swarming millions of Christians that will frown at you and say, that person's blood is on your hands.

They're going to hell because you didn't have the courage to speak up. And you didn't share the Gospel with them. And now they're going to fry in hell for all eternity instead of going to heaven.

And it's all your fault. You're going to go into the eternal future. You're going to try to walk the streets of gold and try to enjoy the angels and the beatific scenes.

But you're going to look down there, and your hands are going to be dripping with the blood of these people that you failed to give the Gospel. Therefore, you'd better get on the stick and you'd better start accosting people. And you'd better start asking them hard questions and cornering them and having some real awkward conversations with them and ask them if they're saved.

And if they're not, then you'd better not let them go until you get them saved. It's your job. Now this is a big load of nonsense.

This is complete, inaccurate, and faulty understanding of God's Word. Look at this. The Jews are in line for destruction, but God has promised them deliverance, right? Mordecai says, look, if you're not the agent of their deliverance, God will bring deliverance from another place.

They are going to be delivered. They are eligible for deliverance. They've been promised deliverance.

They are going to receive deliverance. They are going to receive deliverance from another place, whether you participate or not. And that's the principle in evangelism.

The question is, your eligibility, your usability, your service, your divine good, your opportunity to participate in God's plan. Don't worry about whether or not somebody's going to get saved. Worry about whether or not you yourself are useful to the Father, whether or not you are participating in furthering God's plan and reflecting God's glory.

It's all about whether we ourselves are obedient and faithful. That's the issue. And that ought to be enough motivation.

Would we be apathetic and different? Well, if it's just me, and if it's just whether or not I'm obedient, why no big deal. But if Joe over here is going to, not Joseph, anonymous Joe over here, is going to go to the lake of fire because I don't speak up, well then, now I'm going to be motivated and I won't do anything for God for my own sake. I'll do something, or for Christ's sake, but I'll do it because I don't want old Joe over here to go bobbing around in the lake of fire for all eternity.

What kind of motivation is that? Well, I don't love God enough to serve Him, but I love Joe enough to try to keep him from going to hell. I mean, how many different ways is this faulty thinking? There's a really important principle here. This is my point.

Think about it. Mordecai tells Esther, the deliverance of the people of Israel is not at risk. It's not at stake.

That's not what we're talking about. He says, Esther, my adopted daughter, it is your fate that is in question. Because if you don't avail yourself of this opportunity, this opportunity God has given you to be of service and to be useful to Him, it's you that hangs in the balance.

It's you who are going to be eliminated. Now, I ask you a question before the break. Have you given it any thought? Why does Mordecai mention Esther's father's house? How many people are left out of Esther's father's house? Father's gone.

Mother's gone. Esther is an orphan. She doesn't have an older brother to take her in.

She has to have a cousin take her in. So, there's nobody left out of the father's house. So, why does Mordecai bring it up? He says, if you remain completely silent, verse 14, chapter 4, at this time, relief, ruach, the spirit of life, Hebrew is so eloquent, that one word, ruach, speaks volumes.

God is going to bring the spirit from somewhere else. God is going to bring deliverance. The snatching out of danger is going to come from another place.

But you and your father's house will perish. I find this fascinating. Could girls even perpetuate the father's house? Only under exceptional circumstances.

You remember the daughters of Zelophehad? Remember in the early days, in Joshua's day, when they went into the land, and Zelophehad was a big name there, and he had a lot of land, but he had no sons. And his inheritance was in danger of being distributed, and his name being lost in Israel. And so, the daughters of Zelophehad came in and said, look, since we've got no brothers, we ought to be able to inherit in our father's name, and perpetuate his place, and his land, and his house.

And it was their opportunity to step up and fill in for these non-existent sons and brothers. And that's exactly what they did. They were allowed to inherit.

Well, this is sort of what Esther's doing, isn't she? She is from the tribe of Benjamin, and she is the last remaining representative of her father's house. And it's speaking of inheritance. It's speaking of legacy and destiny, isn't it? And Mordecai says, look, you are in charge.

You hold in your hands the legacy of your father's house. And if you blow this, it's you and your father's house that are going to go away. Your behavior reflects.

Your behavior has its connection to inheritance. And this is not just inheritance in time. We're not talking about what land does the family that Mordecai and Esther are from, what land do they own back in Israel.

What's the only thing that the house can be referring to here? This is that area of opportunity that is going to go beyond time and beyond the grave. Old Testament saints waited for a city whose founder and builder was God. We find this out over in Hebrews chapter 11.

They died in faith, not having received the promise. They had the earnest of the inheritance. They had the promise and they had the hope.

And they were looking ahead to the kingdom when those promises would be fulfilled and they would have possession and inheritance and service in the kingdom. And Mordecai is essentially saying to Esther, look, because if Esther has sons with Ahasuerus, are they going to belong to her father's house? No, they're going to be Persian guys. What's the only thing Mordecai can mean when he talks about Esther's father's house? It's future inheritance.

It's kingdom inheritance. It's when the fallen tent of David is raised back up and David's greater son comes and rules. When that which did not sprout forth that David talked about in his last words, he says everything didn't happen like it ought to have in my house, but God has promised and it's going to be fulfilled later.

Mordecai understands this. So, it is not the fate of Israel that is at stake in Esther's decisions. It's her fate.

And the same is true for you and me. Don't worry about which problem is going to get solved or whether somebody is or isn't going to be saved or somebody is or isn't going to be impressed with our testimony or somebody is or isn't going to be motivated or encouraged or impacted by what we do. If somebody needs impacting, God will impact them.

His Spirit is a whole lot better at communicating than any of us are. Our opportunities reflect on us. It's our inheritance.

It's the reflection of our father's house that is at stake. And we stand or fall based on our own decisions, not someone else's decisions. And God will care for others.

If some missionary gets cold feet and doesn't want to go to Africa and there's people in Africa that need to hear the gospel or need to hear the teaching of the Word of God, God will get that Word to them. He's not going to say, well, Mabutu, I'm real sorry. I know you wanted to be saved and I know you wanted to learn the Bible, but my missionary Fred here was afraid and didn't want to come over, so sorry.

I mean, what kind of limited human vision of God is that? That's not the case. Our decisions reflect on us in spiritual terms. And certainly, we're going to miss opportunities.

We're going to miss the opportunity to be a blessing. We're going to miss the opportunity to participate in those things that Jesus Christ died on the cross to share with us. But ultimately, we only hurt ourselves.

That's what Esther discovers here. If you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your Father's house will perish. Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this.

This is your opportunity. God has put each of us in place for such a time as this. You are the child of your parents.

You are the brother or sister to your siblings. You are the parents of your children. You are the fellow believers in this church.

You participate at your workplace. You participate in your extended family. You have interaction with people in various places and spheres of life.

And God has placed us carefully with malice aforethought in those situations. We have essentially, like Esther, come to the kingdom for such a time as this. If we drop the ball, if we fail, if we're apathetic and indifferent, God will still get his plan accomplished.

We just won't have the privilege of participation in it and we ourselves are going to suffer loss as a result. Is that pretty clear? Revelation chapter 2 and 3, the promises at the end of each letter to each of those seven churches, to Him that overcomes, here's what's available, here is the reward, here is the benefit, here is the great blessing and privilege that attaches to being an overcomer by faith. What an opportunity we have.

We have everything to gain and nothing to lose by paying attention and stepping up when it's time for us to step up and see that we have the opportunity for service. We have the opportunity to shine like a light in a dark place. Every single one of us has to work through the valley of the shadow.

Every single one of us has contact with the darkness and with the evil and with the challenges of this life that are the result of sin and human good and evil. And God has given us the opportunity to put our lamp up on a lamp stand and let it shine and to not be ashamed and not be afraid and not be hesitant and to be committed to the idea that God has a purpose in our life and God has a purpose in our circumstances and to trust Him and to not shrink back. So Esther told Hathak to go back to Mordecai when she hears these words and she says, I understand, I get it.

So now, this is equally important. Our first great point tonight, do you remember it? If I asked you Friday night, do you remember the point from Tuesday, what's the first point? Who knows, but that we have come to this place in our life for such a time as this. God has positioned us in circumstances to make a difference for Him.

And we don't want to miss it. It's not about the benefit or lack of benefit to other people. It's our opportunity.

It's what's going to happen to us. Now, secondly, Esther told them to reply, He said, Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan and fast for me, neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise.

And so, I will go to the king, which is against the law, and if I perish, I perish. She sees her opportunity and what does she do? She solicits prayer. It is legitimate that when we have a challenge and when we have difficulties and when we are facing trouble to make that need known to our fellow believers and ask for prayer.

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. What does the Bible say about our enemies? Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you.

Pray for those who spitefully use you. That's not our instinct, is it? Somebody gives us a hard time. Somebody causes us difficulty.

And we say, How can I stifle this person? How can I bury this person? How can I push this person so far away that I don't have to listen to them? How can I even the score with this person? Our first instinct is not, Wow, there's a really troubled and useless life. I should pray for that person. They really need the light of God's presence.

They really need the light of God's Word in their life. Look how miserable they are that all they can do is run around making me and other people miserable. Pray for those who spitefully use you.

Now, if the Bible says pray for your enemies, how much more our non-enemies, our fellow believers, our family members, our fellow church members? It is legitimate. We don't have to bear our soul. We don't have to air all of our dirty laundry.

We don't have to reveal a lot. But we can always say, You know, I'm having a tough week. I'm having a tough day.

I've got a serious issue. I have to make some important decisions. Please pray for me.

And when we receive a request like that, what do we say? Okay, fine. Dear God, please help Sam. Is that what we say? What do we know about prayer? Boy, it sounds like a clock shop in here, doesn't it? How do we pray? Is that a good enough prayer? Dear God, please help Sam.

Amen. Is that what prayer is for? Dear God, I know you probably forgot about old Sam. Just reminding you, you know, he asked for prayer, so I'm praying for him.

Thanks a lot. Amen. Is that how it works? What's the purpose of prayer? Think about it.

Esther is asking Mordecai to pray. All this fasting and so on, that's for prayer. Stop what you're doing.

Don't take time to eat. Make an appeal to God. In the Bible, fasting for believers is always for the purpose of making appeal to God.

That's what it's for. It isn't just, well, let's have a contest to see whose tummy growls the loudest. It's not just for the purpose of making appeal to God.

It's so that you can devote yourself to something and you are saying by pushing away all other activity and pushing away food, I have something much more important. This is how important this thing is to me. I'm denying myself my daily meal.

I'm going to take the time I would have spent eating and feeding myself to go to God and make an appeal for someone else. That's fasting. And we can fast all the time.

If you sacrifice your time to understand the word of God better or to be able to answer someone's question, somebody asks you a question, you say, well, let me get back to you on that. You go and do research and you don't do your normal activities and maybe you skip a meal if you're preparing a lesson or you're working on an answer for somebody. Well, that's fasting.

You're doing something that denies yourself for a spiritual priority. That's what fasting is. In this case, it's for prayer.

Now, what's the nature of prayer? If I came to you and said, I'm having a tough time, I'm having some issues at work, please pray for me. I don't have to give you the gory details, but I tell you it's work related. So now you say, all right, I'm going to pray for Sam.

How would you go about it? Well, just as an example, you can think, well, what are the issues for a believer in the workplace? We know that anybody who works for a living, there is financial remuneration involved, right? There is always the possibility that you can lose a job. You want a job to be done well. We are to work with our hands.

The Bible says we are to work and provide for ourselves, right? And so, if I'm having difficulty working, I'm going to pray for Sam. You can say, dear Lord, please help Sam to be faithful. Give him concentration.

Give him energy. Help him to be diligent. Give him the perception to see the things that need to be done and to set good priorities.

And help him to conduct himself in his work in such a way that the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ is reflected and is visible and is manifest to others. That others can look at him as he does his work and see Christ in him. That he has patience where he needs it.

That he has endurance where he needs it. Make his rest effective. If he's short on sleep, please bless the sleep that he does get so that it will be super sleep and that he'll wake up refreshed and energetic and able to do the things that are required of him.

Give him sharpness and acuity of mind. Help him to remember as he does his work that he is to do all for the glory of God. I mean, you can pray endlessly.

And all I said was, I'm having trouble at work, please pray for me, right? This is your opportunity to cycle all of the things you've learned from the Word of God into that prayer. It benefits you to pray for me. It does you more good than it does me.

Because you are working a story problem. What knowledge do I have that bears on this problem? And you can receive a blessing praying for me. And God says, now this is the synergy and this is the blessing of fellowship that I'm looking for amongst my people.

Look at this. This problem has created blessing in the lives of all the people praying for him and all the people praying for him. because they are all thinking about the Word of God and making application and getting their eyes off of themselves.

All of the time you're praying for me, you're not thinking about yourself, are you? You may even be fasting and denying yourself things. And this is the essence of love. Love is what? Sacrificial to self, beneficial to others.

The more time we spend praying for other people, the less we can possibly be subjective because we're not having our eyes on ourself and on our circumstances. We're busy asking God's grace to rain down on someone else. And that's love.

And it's part of the triad of Christian virtues. I mean, if you think about this, the opportunity to pray for someone that you know and for whom you can pray intelligently is a great thing.

And it does nothing but glorify God and bless the prayer and the prayee, right? So that's what's going on here.

That's what we see going on in the end of Esther chapter 4. Gather the Jews who are present in Shushan and fast for me, neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. Three-day prayer session. And how many times have we seen this three-day period in Scripture? And what does it represent? It is like death, burial, and resurrection.

Esther says, I have decided that I am going to go and I am going to go and I am going to go essentially put my life on the line for my people. Isn't this what the Lord Jesus did at the cross? And there are those three days where He's in the heart of the earth. And at the end of those three days, here is life from God.

And this is a foreshadowing. Esther, of course, probably has no idea of what the timing is going to be of the Messiah's work on behalf of the people. But God knows and God put it in her heart to ask for this three-day period of prayer.

And it foreshadows deliverance after three days where someone's life is in the balance and people are appealing to God. So Mordecai went his way and did according to all that Esther commanded him. And this is kind of a turnabout.

Three or four times it is said Esther did according to all that Mordecai commanded her. This time, Mordecai returns the favor and does everything that Esther asked. And this is the great thing about our fellowship is today I may be asking you to pray for me.

Tomorrow, you may be asking me to pray for you. And we can apply the Word of God in our souls before the throne of grace on behalf of one another. It's one of the great things about assembling ourselves together.

So just remember, our situations, our circumstances, our decisions, it's an opportunity. It's not a problem. It's an opportunity for us.

Well, let's close here in a word of prayer. We'll pick up at Esther chapter five next week. Father, thank you for the clear and beautiful way that you illustrate these truths in your Word.

We ask that God, the Holy Spirit, will impress them in our hearts. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.