

Esther 06-04-18B

We pick up our study now in Esther chapter 8. Haman is dangling by his hands 75 feet up in the air in his backyard. I want to point out that when this whole thing began, Haman had created this threat. Mordecai put on his sackcloth and was shouting through the streets, raising the alarm.

What happened? Esther said, you all fast for three days, right? And on the third day, according to chapter 5, Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace. And she put herself in the power of the king. The third day of that week, and she asked the king to come to a banquet.

And on that day, they came to the banquet and he said, my petition and my request, come to another banquet tomorrow. So that then was the fourth day. This banquet that we've just looked at is on the day after the three days of fasting, right? And it is on that day, the fourth day, that Mordecai was supposed to go up on the cross in the morning, wasn't it? Zeresh and the friends said, erect the thing, which he did on the third day, the day of the banquet, the day of leading Mordecai around on the horse and so on.

And then on the fourth day, instead of Mordecai being hanged up there and defeated and made a laughing stock for everyone in the city to see 75 feet in the air, instead, it ends up that afternoon being Haman. Well, if you think about the resurrection season that we've just celebrated here in April, that week of the Lord Jesus' life is very similar, isn't it? The Passover lamb was taken up on the 10th of Nisan, the 10th of Abib. And then four days later, it was sacrificed.

And when Esther literally puts her life on the line, revealing to the king her petition and her request on behalf of herself and her people, that when it seems like it's the most dangerous and it seems like it's most likely that she could be slain on the spot, instead, it is her enemy and the enemy of her people who was slain instead. And it is that fourth day of the week. It is Thursday of Passion Week when the Lord Jesus went to the cross and was crucified between the evenings in the afternoon.

And in suffering the death on the cross, he led captivity captive. He defeated death. Death could not hold him.

And he achieved the victory that makes our salvation possible. Well, now in chapter 8, it says, 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.

So the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman. You know, they bagged up Haman. And just as he was going out the door, the king said, Hey, wait a minute.

Come here. He got that ring off of him. And then they took him out and dangled him up on the 75 foot high cross.

He took that signet ring, which he'd taken from Haman and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther appointed Mordecai over the house of Haman. That estate, all of those possessions and so on, go to Esther and she sets Mordecai as the manager, as the steward over that estate.

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. The king held out the golden scepter toward Esther. Once again, this is one of those risky situations.

But once again, she has achieved the king's favor. He holds out the golden scepter. She arose and stood before the king and said, If it pleases the king, and if I have found favor in his sight, if the thing seems right to the king, if I am pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman, the son of Hamadathah the Agagite, which he wrote to annihilate the Jews who are in all the king's provinces.

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? Even though Haman is defeated and is dangling up there, I think this is sort of hang by the wrists until dead type of thing. So, he's gone but not forgotten. And his edict, that decree, is still in force.

As the king is about to explain, he says in verse 7, to Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, he seems to be present at this occasion. Indeed, I have given Esther the house of Haman. They have hanged him on the gallows, on the tree, because he tried to lay his hand on the Jews.

You yourselves write a decree concerning the Jews, as you please, in the king's name. 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.

Remember in Romans when Paul is talking about the plight of humanity and he says, whereas by one man sin entered the world and death by sin. So the death passed upon all men because all have sinned. When Satan successfully deceived Eve in the garden and Adam and Eve fell, death and this separation from God entered the world.

When the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross and defeated Satan and defeated the power of death and made our salvation possible, death did not leave the world, did it? The decree of death and the opposition of Satan and the principalities and powers is still all around us, isn't it? Now, if Jesus came and saved us, then why is it that once we accept Him as our Savior, we are not free from sin and death? Do believers still die? I should hope so, otherwise we ought to be able to find the apostles and all of the Christian martyrs and men who died giving us our Bible and so forth. They ought to all still be available, but they're not because we still die. Even though Satan has been defeated, what has been brought into the world because of him is still here.

And you see this reflected in the decree that Haman got passed. Once the signet ring goes on, it's irrevocable, it's irreversible. So what does King Ahasuerus do? He says, you write another decree.

The first decree, what did it do? What did the first decree do? If you go way back, the king's scribes were called, this is chapter 3, verse 12, 13th day of the first month, decree was written according to all that Haman commanded, in the name of the king, sent by couriers all over the place, to destroy, to kill and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, on the 13th day of the 12th month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their possessions. Because that's the money that's going to be taxed

back into the treasury. The plunderers get to keep part of it and they send part of it back to the king.

That's the deal. And Haman calculated the amount and he said it's going to be so many million dollars for the king. Remember that? That was the decree.

That decree is irrevocable. It's been sealed at the king's ring. So there is still this day of reckoning on the 13th day of the 12th month coming against the Jews.

It's kind of like the day of our death. Even though we are believers, we are still going to die unless the Lord comes back in our lifetime, which I think is highly likely if we aren't accidentally taken out early. So what does the king do here? He can't revoke the first decree and say, okay, the 13th day of the 12th month, nobody can kill the Jews.

What does he say? He says, you write a decree and the king's scribes are called in once again in verse 9, in the third month, the month of Sivan on the 23rd day. Put this in your mind now. You remember in the Jewish calendar, the first month, the month of Abi Ibn Nisan, you had Passover and unleavened bread and firstfruits and all that.

And then 50 days later, you have Pentecost, right? And then the month of Sivan, which puts you in the second month. The month after Nisan is E-R. So you count 50 days and that's going to take you into the middle of E-R after 30 days, right? And then after another 20 days, that's going to get you into the third month with your Sivan.

It's going to be pretty early in that month. This is in the May-June time frame according to our calendar. Nisan has 30 days, E-R has 29 days, Sivan has 30 days.

So the Feast of Pentecost has just recently passed for Israel, at least on the calendar. So this is the 23rd day and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded to the Jews, Satraps, governors, princes of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, 127 provinces, every province in its own script, every people in their own language, the Jews in their own script and language. He wrote in the name of the king, King Ahasuerus, sealed it with the king's signet ring and he sent letters by couriers on horseback riding on royal horses bred from swift steeds.

This is literally wind horses. Some people think of them as camels, dromedary or whatever. But these are the swiftest animals available.

By these letters the king permitted the Jews who were in every city to gather together and protect their lives. They have the power to, and look at the very same three words that I gave you in the first lesson, to destroy, to kill and to annihilate. All the forces of any people or province that would assault them, both little children and women, to plunder their possessions on one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus on the 13th day of the twelfth month which is the month of Adar.

Copy the document issued as a decree. Every province published for all people so the Jews would be ready on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies. The couriers who rode on royal horses went out, hastened and pressed on by the king's command and the decree was issued in Shushan the citadel.

So, on that day when they were to be victimized, to be judged, to be killed, annihilated and destroyed, they are given equal power. Now think about it. You, I confidently assume, are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

At the point that we believed in Christ and trusted Him as our Savior, why didn't God just take Satan and the demons out of the picture? Just say, this is my child, this is my son or my daughter and they're untouchable. You can't touch them. You can't get near them.

You can't afflict them. You can't torment them. You can't attack them.

You can't get anywhere near them. They're golden. They glow in the dark.

I've got a wall of fire around them and you just go find somebody else to pick on. That would be the equivalent of Ahasuerus reversing his decree here and saying, nobody touch the Jews. Instead, this decree says no, the attack is still coming but you now have equal authority to resist and to defend yourself and to attack the attacker.

Now which do you think is better for the people? Think about all through the history in the Bible. How about Joshua and the Israelites when they crossed the Jordan into the land of Canaan and there's Jericho and Ai and all the other settlements and fortifications of the Canaanites facing them and God says, go in and drive out all of these people. Now, who is keeping those people alive? Who's raining on their crops and causing their animals to thrive and calve and give birth to lambs and so on? All of these evil, pagan, godless, savage Canaanites.

If it wasn't for God, none of them could stay alive. God could think a thought and they would all drop over in their tracks wouldn't they? They could all come down with some horrible plague. Their hearts could all just stop and all the Canaanites would be standing there saying, well hello there, buzz and then just fall over and they'd be dead.

Why didn't God do that? Don't you think the Israelites would have been happy to come in and just, you know, dig holes and bury the bodies and take everything over? God did not kill the enemy. God told Israel, you go in and kill the enemy. Here, hundreds of years later, God arranges it to where the Jews are not given a free deliverance.

They have to fight for their deliverance. What's the advantage? Why wouldn't it be better for all of these Persians to just cease and desist? It doesn't leave the Jews any better off than they were, does it? This way they can exploit the power of God. They can trust.

What are they going to do when the hordes of Persians come trying to take their lives and take their land and take their possessions? Are they warriors? When's the last time Israel fought a battle? When's the last time the men of Israel picked up swords and spears and shields? It's been hundreds of years. They've been slaves since the days of Josiah, since before Daniel and Ezekiel were taken captive. It's been 150, 200 years since they've, as it were, fired a shot in anger, fired an arrow or picked up a sword.

What do they need? They need conflict. They need to stand up and defend themselves and they need to do it in the fear of God, in trust, in faith. Because it's not going to be their might and it's not going to be their power.

There's another great verse in Scripture that says, not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. And this is going to give them a conflict and give them a challenge and give them an opportunity to trust God and to do battle in the strength that God gives them. That's what God does for us.

That's why we have challenge. That's why we have conflict. That's why we have difficult times.

God expects us to pick up the sword and start hacking and slashing the Canaanites, hacking and slashing the covetous robber Persians that are coming after us, trying to take our lives and trying to take our stuff. Our warfare is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers and rulers. Keep your finger on Esther chapter 8 and turn over to Ephesians chapter 6. Verse 10, Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. We don't necessarily stand against the devil himself, but we stand against his plots and his schemes and his doctrines and his political movements and his social forces and the ideas and the philosophies that he inspires, the trends and the fads that he sponsors. We do not wrestle against flesh and blood.

We wrestle against principalities. We wrestle against powers. We wrestle against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places.

Do you ever feel that way? Do you ever feel like you're battling a spiritual host in heavenly places? Like there are forces at work beyond your control? Bad stuff is just happening. You can't get a break. It's what a lot of people call bad luck.

Just bad luck. Just unfortunate circumstance. Bad karma.

Bad mojo. Bad circumstances. That is the wickedness of spiritual hosts in heavenly places.

Therefore, because of this, because we are fighting evil, we are fighting evil. Now, that evil is going to have faces. It's going to have human faces.

It's going to have philosophical faces. It's going to have media faces. It's going to be staring out your TV tube.

It's going to be staring out of magazines that you read while you're in the waiting room of many places. Not at Dr. Godbold's office, but a lot of places. You get these evil magazines, evil ideas in them.

People asking you to take surveys. By the way, do you ever see these surveys where they say what personality are you or what kind of person are you? When you take the survey, it comes out and it says, well, you're an idealist and a mountain climbing enthusiast and you're a dreamer of big dreams. No matter what you do on the survey, at the end, when you look up your score, it tells you all these things.

It tells you all these complimentary things about yourself. These are wildly popular. They're in magazines, Cosmo.

Not that I read Cosmopolitan, but that's where I hear a lot of them are. And they get copied into emails and into websites and so on. You take these surveys and it comes back and says, oh, you're a hard nosed realist and you're pragmatic and you're practical and you're a problem solver.

People look to you for leadership. That is so much hogwash. If you were really a hard nosed realist, you wouldn't be sitting there taking that stupid survey.

No hard nosed realist is going to waste his time reading Cosmo and penciling in answers in goofball, you know, self-congratulatory surveys. Well, I just wanted to throw that in. The whole armor of God, the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, that you may be able to stand in the evil day.

Evil days are coming. Evil days are here. One evil day follows another.

They're like chain smoking. One evil day just lights the next. And they stink.

Stand therefore. Look at how many times it says stand. Look at verse 13.

Take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness. Now, you say, okay, fine, that all sounds great.

I don't want to fall in the evil day, so I'm going to put on the armor of God. So we all fold up our Bibles, we put away our notebooks and we stand up and we leave here. We go out and march Sally forth and say, all right, I'm going to wear the full armor of God.

How are you going to do that? Let me ask you just one piece of armor. Let's talk about the breastplate of righteousness. Now, seriously, I'm asking you a serious question.

Pay attention. Everybody look up here. God says put on the breastplate of righteousness.

How are you going to do it? It's a command of God. It's in scripture. Put on the breastplate of righteousness.

Okay, what are the steps? I'm getting a lot of blank stares. Can you not put on the righteousness of God as a breastplate? How do you do it? What is the practical, actual way you do that? So you have to ask yourself these questions. When it says put the shoes of the gospel of peace on your feet, it sounds great, but how do you do that? If you don't do it, the first arrow from the enemy is going to go right through your chest and you're going to clutch your breast and fall backwards in a pool of your own blood, spiritually speaking.

Not supposed to happen. How do you put on the breastplate of righteousness? You're going to leave here and go out and what are you going to do? How are you going to put that on? It's kind of a hard question to answer, isn't it? Well, think about it. It says the breastplate of righteousness.

What is a breastplate? It's a piece of protective armor that protects your most vital organs, doesn't it? Your heart, your lungs, your liver, your spleen, all of that important stuff that you

don't want holes poked in from the front. It's a breastplate and it's righteousness. If you don't have the breastplate of righteousness, you're going to be neutralized.

You're going to fall and you're going to be seriously wounded, right? So how are you going to do this? Well, let's say tomorrow you're going along, toodling through your day and you have to make a choice. And it's a right and wrong kind of thing. You have the choice of getting angry and saying something unkind to someone.

You have the opportunity of being impatient. You have the opportunity of being arrogant, looking down the nose at someone. Ah, poor slob.

Poor hopeless, wandering around, bumping into things person. What's the matter with them? Don't they know any better? And we can build ourselves up by denigrating others, right? And then we say, wait a minute. Wait a minute.

That's an arrow flying into my spiritual chest. I'm supposed to have the breastplate of righteousness on. And what does it mean? We choose what we're going to think and we know when we're starting to think wrong, don't we? And we have to stop at that point and say, wait a minute.

I'm not going to send my mind down this road. Maybe we're going to start worrying. Oh, I've got this problem.

Somebody's going to think this. Somebody's going to do that. This is going to turn out badly.

And we start worrying on it. We start chewing on it and rotating it around and mauling it in our minds over and over and over. And we can't get past it.

And it depresses us and we get worried and we're sweating bullets over it, trying to figure out how we're going to solve this problem. Instead of saying, that's out of my control. I'm going to put that in God's hands and I'm going to forget about it.

I can't do anything about that. What's going to happen is going to happen. I've got to give that to God.

That's putting on the breastplate of righteousness. When you decide to give something to God, I can't control how that person is going to think. I'm going to give it to God.

I'm going to shine up this big, thick piece of stainless steel and stick it on my chest. And I'm not going to let that arrow of worry or that arrow of arrogance or that arrow of impatience or that arrow of pride stick in my chest and knock me out of the box. This is something I have to trust God for.

I look at myself and I realize I don't have anything that I did not receive. That's the verse of scripture. What do you have that you did not receive? How can we be arrogant? How can we be proud when we are nothing but recipients? We don't have a single thing, not a gift, not a talent, not a beauty mark.

Nothing good do we have that we did not receive from God, who gives every good gift, comes down from the Father of lights. And we ought to be thankful and we ought to be

humble and we ought to be looking for ways to use those gifts to serve Him. That's the practical way to put on the breastplate of righteousness.

How do you put it on? You've got to pick it up and strap it on. You know what righteousness is. It's a solid thing.

You can see it. You can identify it. And you pick it up and you say, that's mine.

And the first thing people see when they look at me is that shiny breastplate of righteousness. That's how I want to live. That's how I want to be identified.

But we've got to make the decision. That's why it's a command. It doesn't just happen because you're saved.

And if we don't pick it up, we're going to walk right by it and get a spear through the chest. Same thing with the rest of these pieces of armor. Look at them.

There is a way to seize and lay hold of each one of these things. The helmet of salvation. Helmet protects your head.

Your head's where you think, right? Your thinking can get all screwed up if you don't remember that you're saved. If you don't remember that you've been delivered from the power of evil, from the power of sin. That the Lord Jesus Christ is in heaven, interceding at God's right hand.

That Jesus is coming back. He wants to present to himself a glorious church that doesn't have a spot or a wrinkle or any such thing. Holy and without blemish.

We want to be one of those that walk with him in white. That serve him and reflect his glory. That have opportunities beyond comprehension in the kingdoms that are to come.

Shine like lights in the kingdom of the Father. That's salvation. Stick it on our heads so that we remember who we are and why we're here.

We have to make that happen. This is what Esther has done. This is what Mordecai has done.

This victory is not complete just because Haman has been hung on the cross. God gives them favor with Ahasuerus and this decree gives them the ability to pick up their weapons, put on their armor and fight back. They're not victims anymore.

The Bible says you are not a victim. You are a warrior. It may look bad.

It may be that the decree is against you. All the cards are stacked against you. But with God, all things are possible.

God works all things together for good to those who love him. Any time we start feeling like a victim, we're arrogant because it's all about us and what we deserve that we didn't get. We are not a victim.

Don't let Satan slip that arrow past your armor. We are warriors and we take the tools and the resources that God has given us and we fight. We are thoroughly equipped.

We are perfectly armored and given the weapons for every good work. That's what the Jews are going to be able to do. They're going to go into the conflict and win a victory in the power of God, by God's grace, in God's strength.

That's why we're here. That's why we are still in the fray. And that's what this great chapter encourages us to do as well.

Notice in verse 16, the Jews had light and gladness and that's what we should have as well. Father, thank you for this great picture of the victory the Lord Jesus Christ achieved on the cross over Satan, over evil, over death. We pray that we can be faithful to exploit that victory and to use the wonderful gifts that we've been given through Christ to reflect your glory and be ready to serve both now and in the ages to come.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.