

06-11-2017

Message: God Humbles the Proud and Exalts the Humble

Text: Esther 5:5b - 6:14

Introduction

A. Over the last 2 weeks as we worked through chapter 4 into chapter 5, we recognized God speaking several truths to our hearts from the book of Esther in order to sustain our faith and hope in Him.

1. **4:1-3 God in His providence tests the righteous.**
2. **4:4-9 No superficial solutions will satisfy.**
3. **4:10-12 Risk or cost to self is no excuse for inaction.**
4. **4:13-14 Self-sacrifice is the action to which we are called.**
5. **4:15-17 Faith obeys the Lord and leaves the outcome to Him.**
6. **4:15-16 God's faithfulness does not enable us to predict circumstances that He has not promised.**
7. **4:17 - 5:1 Since God often chooses to accomplish His purposes through human agents, we are responsible to act with His wisdom and do what He puts in our hands to do.**
8. **5:2-4 God controls the hearts of those in authority over us.**
9. **5:5-8 God directs our plans to fulfill His plans and purposes.**

B. We ended last week with this last point. We know Esther had planned a banquet for king Ahasuerus and Haman, in hopes of exposing Haman's treachery and pleading for the life of her Hebrew people.

Esther 5:5 Then the king said, "Bring Haman quickly that we may do as Esther desires." So the king and Haman came to the banquet which Esther had prepared. ⁶ As they drank their wine at the banquet, the king said to Esther, "What is your petition, for it shall be granted to you. And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be done." ⁷ So Esther replied, "My petition and my request is: ⁸ if I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and do what I request, may the king and Haman come to the banquet which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king says."

1. Esther was in a position to answer the king, who shows a willingness to grant whatever she requested. She has an open door before her. Instead, she requests a second banquet the next day, and promises to reveal her request then. Was a second banquet her cool, calm, collected plan from the start, with the delay intended to heighten the king's interest? Was she being a smooth operator, or did she need to take a deep breath and step back before pressing further forward through what had been a daunting day?
2. Regardless, whether the delay was her plan or a spontaneous reaction, we are purposely not told, for the main actor in this scene is the One who remains unmentioned throughout the book - God!

Proverbs 16:9 The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps.

3. Even if Esther had planned the delay all along, she could not have imagined how God would use it to bring about the downfall of Haman for which she with her people had fasted and prayed. The delay would provide opportunity for Haman's pride play out so as to bring about his downfall.

Proverbs 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling.

- C. In the remainder of chapter 5 and on into chapter 6, God continues to speak His saving truth to our hearts, calling us to put away pride and live as humble, fully devoted followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, because we trust in His sovereign wisdom, power, and love to orchestrate our history for His glory and our good.
- D. God intends for us to detect His unseen hand orchestrating the events of Esther's and Mordecai's lives through satire, "fortuitous coincidences," and dramatic reversal of fortunes.

I. 5:9a Pride deceives us, blinding us to the danger to which our pride exposes us.

Esther 5:9 **Then Haman went out that day glad and pleased of heart**; but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate and that he did not stand up or tremble before him, Haman was filled with anger against Mordecai.

- A. Ironically, Haman left the banquet pleased of heart over the fact that he alone had been invited 2x to a banquet with the king and queen, not knowing that these banquets were designed for his demise. His pride was deceiving him, blinding him to his impending downfall at the hand of the Lord.

Obadiah 1:3 "**The arrogance of your heart has deceived you**, you who live in the clefts of the rock, in the loftiness of your dwelling place, who say in your heart, 'Who will bring me down to earth?'"⁴ "Though you build high like the eagle, though you set your nest among the stars, **from there I will bring you down,**" declares the LORD.

- B. Self-destructive pride manifests itself by an unwillingness to fully, wholeheartedly submit ourselves to Christ as our King and Savior, by a willingness/desire to remain half-hearted, lukewarm. If this is us, see the danger signs for what they are and entrust all that we are to all that Christ is.

Revelation 3:16 'So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will vomit you out of My mouth.¹⁷ 'Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and **you do not know that you are** wretched and miserable and poor and **blind** and naked,

- C. Pride in self and faith in the Lord cannot exist together. The faith by which God justifies us

is a faith by which we humble ourselves before Christ as Lord.

Habakkuk 2:4 "Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; but the righteous will live by his faith.

Luke 18:11 "The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'¹³ "But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'¹⁴ **"I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."**

II. 5:9b,10 Proud, self-absorbed people hate those who do not exalt them.

Esther 5:9 Then Haman went out that day glad and pleased of heart; **but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate and that he did not stand up or tremble before him, Haman was filled with anger against Mordecai.**¹⁰ Haman controlled himself, however, went to his house and sent for his friends and his wife Zeresh.

- A. Exaltation of self is an idol that spawns several idols of the heart - my pleasure (comfort), my power (control), my praise (my performance in my eyes, my performance in the eyes of others). [Show tree graphic]
- B. When our idol of praise is obstructed, frustrated, does not perform as we want, we can become angry, jealous, depressed, dishonest, unduly competitive, gossipy, slanderous, critical of others, etc. Beware of signs of self-destructive pride and turn to the Lord for cleansing.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to **forgive us** our sins and to **cleanse us** from all unrighteousness.

III. 5:11-13 The proud have no lasting basis for contentment or joy.

Esther 5:11 Then Haman recounted to them the glory of his riches, and the number of his sons, and every *instance* where the king had magnified him and how he had promoted him above the princes and servants of the king.¹² Haman also said, "Even Esther the queen let no one but me come with the king to the banquet which she had prepared; and tomorrow also I am invited by her with the king."¹³ **"Yet all of this does not satisfy me every time I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate."**

- A. With all Haman had, he could not be satisfied, content, happy. He needed more. The contentment, satisfaction, and joy of the proud rests on what is temporary, changing, beyond our control.

Proverbs 27:20 Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied, **nor are the eyes of man ever satisfied.**

Ecclesiastes 1:8 ... The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor is the ear filled with hearing.

Ecclesiastes 5:10 **He who loves money will not be satisfied with money,** nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is emptiness.

- B. The righteous find contentment and joy in the Lord Who remains forever and does not change. Their appetite will be forever satisfied.

Psalms 17:15 As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness; **I will be satisfied with Your likeness** when I awake.

Matthew 5:6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for **they shall be satisfied.**

IV. 5:14 The proud will be caught in their own plots against the righteous.

Esther 5:14 Then Zeresh his wife and all his friends said to him, "Have a gallows fifty cubits high made and in the morning ask the king to have Mordecai hanged on it; then go joyfully with the king to the banquet." And the advice pleased Haman, so he had the gallows made.

- A. Haman's wounded pride created a thirst for immediate revenge. Since Mordecai would not show him the honor to which Haman felt entitled, Haman would humiliate Mordecai by making his death a public spectacle, hanging him 75 feet above the ground, visible to all.
- B. Yet God's plan for Haman's downfall was working through Haman's plan. Haman would be hanged on his own gallows the next day. The reversal of fortunes is no mere coincidence, it is God at work.

Esther 7:10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows which he had prepared for Mordecai, and the king's anger subsided.

Psalms 10:2 In pride the wicked hotly pursue the afflicted; Let them be caught in the plots which they have devised.

Proverbs 26:27 He who digs a pit will fall into it, and he who rolls a stone, it will come back on him.

V. 6:1-5 God is at work protecting and delivering His people, often unawares to them.

Esther 6:1 During that night the king could not sleep so he gave an order to bring the book of records, the chronicles, and they were read before the king.² It was found written

what Mordecai had reported concerning Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs who were doorkeepers, that they had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus.³ The king said, "What honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?" Then the king's servants who attended him said, "Nothing has been done for him."⁴ So the king said, "Who is in the court?" Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king's palace in order to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai on the gallows which he had prepared for him.⁵ The king's servants said to him, "Behold, Haman is standing in the court." And the king said, "Let him come in."

- A. God is using coincidence to make us aware of His active presence in protecting His people.
1. The king, after feasting and drinking, happened to be sleepless on this night that Haman had been plotting Mordecai's death.
 2. He happened to ask for the Persian historical records to be read to him.
 3. They happened to read a portion recounting Mordecai's foiling an assassination plot against Xerxes 4 years earlier, when Mordecai, who happened to work around the gate happened to learn of the plot and notify Esther.

Esther 2:21 In those days, while Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's officials from those who guarded the door, became angry and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus.²² But the plot became known to Mordecai and he told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name.²³ Now when the plot was investigated and found *to be so*, they were both hanged on a gallows; and it was written in the Book of the Chronicles in the king's presence.

4. The typical practice of Persian kings to immediately reward loyal acts happened to be forgotten until this night.
 5. Haman, who happened to come to the King early to request Mordecai's life, happened to therefore be available for Mordecai's exaltation and his own humiliation.
- B. Neither Esther nor Mordecai had any idea that Mordecai's life was in jeopardy of ending within hours. Yet God was preserving him all along, and not only Him, but in the broad picture, the seed of Abraham, David, from whom would come the Messiah, whose would deliver Mordecai, Esther, and all of God's people from the guilt of their sins, dying in their place on the cross.

Psalm 121:1 A Song of Ascents. I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; From where shall my help come?² My help *comes* from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth.³ He will not allow your foot to slip; **He who keeps you will not slumber.**⁴ **Behold, He who keeps Israel Will neither slumber nor sleep.**⁵ **The LORD is your keeper;** The LORD is your shade on your right hand.⁶ The sun will not smite you by day, Nor the moon by night.⁷ **The LORD will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul.**⁸ The LORD will guard your going out and your coming in **from this time forth and forever.**

- C. David Firth writes (The Message of Esther, p.99, The Bible Speaks Today series) ... *"We need, perhaps, to develop the skill of reflecting more on the seemingly ordinary events of*

life to appreciate how God has been at work in our daily experience. This is often in ways that we only notice at a later point when we recognize how a series of apparently unconnected events actually come together to serve the purposes of God."

VI. 6:6-13 God Humbles the Proud and Exalts the Humble

A. 6:6-9 Haman's pride sets up his humiliation

Esther 6:6 So Haman came in and the king said to him, "What is to be done for the man whom the king desires to honor?" And Haman said to himself, "Whom would the king desire to honor more than me?"⁷ Then Haman said to the king, "For the man whom the king desires to honor,⁸ let them bring a royal robe which the king has worn, and the horse on which the king has ridden, and on whose head a royal crown has been placed;⁹ and let the robe and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble princes and let them array the man whom the king desires to honor and lead him on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him, 'Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honor.'"

Proverbs 29:23 A man's pride will bring him low, but a humble spirit will obtain honor.

B. Mordecai is exalted - a reversal of fortunes by God's doing.

Esther 6:10 Then the king said to Haman, "Take quickly the robes and the horse as you have said, and do so for Mordecai the Jew, who is sitting at the king's gate; do not fall short in anything of all that you have said."¹¹ So **Haman took the robe and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city square, and proclaimed before him, "Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honor."**¹² Then Mordecai returned to the king's gate. **But Haman hurried home, mourning, with his head covered.**¹³ Haman recounted to Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him. Then his wise men and Zeresh his wife said to him, "If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish origin, you will not overcome him, but will surely fall before him."

Conclusion

- A. God delayed Mordecai's reward, his exaltation, for wise purposes that led to his deliverance from Haman.
- B. God is delaying our eternal reward for His wise and loving purposes that will lead to the deliverance of all His chosen people from His coming judgment upon a proud, rebellious world. He will exalt us at the proper time. Now is the time for us to humble ourselves before Him.

1 Peter 5:5 ... **all of you**, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.⁶ Therefore

humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,⁷ casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

- C. The Lord has been, is, and will continue to preserve us until the day He returns for us. Be found among the blessed who trust in Him.

Psalm 34:7 **The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him, and rescues them.**⁸ O taste and see that the LORD is good; **How blessed is the one who takes refuge in Him!**