

Title: **TWO PILLOWS FOR MY SOUL**

Subject: *God's Providence in the Book of Esther*

Text: Esther 8:1-2 and 9:1-4

Introduction:

My subject is **TWO PILLOWS FOR MY SOUL**. I want you to open your Bibles to the book of Esther. We will begin in the chapter 8. I want us to read the opening verses of chapters 8 and 9. Esther 8:1-2 and Esther 9:1-4.

(Esther 8:1-2) “**On that day did the king Ahasuerus give the house of Haman the Jews' enemy unto Esther the queen.** And Mordecai came before the king; for Esther had told what he [was] unto her. 2 **And the king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.**”

(Esther 9:1-4) “Now in the twelfth month, that [is], the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, **in the**

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day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, (though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them;) 2 The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as sought their hurt: and **no man could withstand them;** for the fear of them fell upon all people. 3 And **all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the deputies, and officers of the king, helped the Jews; because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them.** 4 For **Mordecai [was] great in the king's house, and his fame went out throughout all the provinces: for this man Mordecai waxed greater and greater.**”

Look back at verse 1 of chapter 9. Take special note of what we are told there. — “*In the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them.*” What a blessed revelation this is of the wonderful providence of our

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God! — *“In the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them.”* — The Book of Esther shows us a picture of the secret workings of Divine providence to accomplish God’s purpose of grace for his elect.

Proposition: This book is intended to assure us that our God sovereignly manipulates all things for the salvation of his people, to assure us that no matter how things appear all is well because our God is still on his throne.

(Psalms 115:3) “But our God *is* in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.”

(Psalms 135:6) “Whatsoever the LORD pleased, *that* did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.”

(Romans 11:33-36) “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable [are] his judgments, and his ways

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past finding out! 34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? 35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? 36 For of him, and through him, and to him, [are] all things: to whom [be] glory for ever. Amen.”

The Book of Esther is a beautifully simple historic narrative of the events that took place in the king’s palace at Shushan in Persia, during the days of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, when Ahasuerus was king.

God’s name is not to be found in these ten chapters of Israel’s history, because the Lord God had hidden himself from his people, just as he told them he would (Deuteronomy 31:16-18). The Lord hid his face from his people because they had deliberately chosen to stay in the land of their captivity, dwelling among the heathen, instead of returning to Jerusalem (instead of returning to him) with Zerubbabel. **The events of this Book took place during the 60 years between the first**

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remnant's return under Zerubbabel and the second, smaller remnant's return under Ezra.

THE STORY

There are four principle characters in this Book of Esther.

- Ahasuerus the King of Persia — “Venerable Father”
- Mordecai Esther’s Uncle — “Little Man” — This little man was highly exalted above all others by King Ahasuerus, the venerable father.
- Esther — “Star” — Esther beautifully portrays both Christ our Mediator and the suppliant sinner at the throne of grace.
- Haman — “Magnificent” — That magnificent man was laid low by King Ahasuerus, the venerable father.

This is how the story goes.

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- Ahasuerus had a big party to show off his greatness, “*according to the state of the king*”. It lasted for many days.
- One day, when he had had a little too much to drink, he called for his wife, Vashti (“Beautiful”), to come show herself to his guests, “*for she was fair to look on*”.
- Vashti refused the king’s request. She may have been the first feminist in history; but this was not a good idea. The king’s request was no mere request!
- All the king’s men were enraged. If the king’s wife could get by with such arrogant defiance, all their wives would try to imitate her.
 - King Ahasuerus divorced Vashti.
 - After a while, he began to miss female companionship.
 - In chapter two, they held a great beauty pageant—A Miss Persia contest.
 - Esther won the prize, hands down.
 - Ahasuerus could not have been happier. The old king was about to marry the most beautiful woman in the land.

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(Esther 2:17-18) “And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti. (18) Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, *even* Esther’s feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the state of the king.”

HAMAN

Then, in chapter 3, the king promoted a man named Haman to be prime minister of his great empire. Everybody bowed and scraped before Haman, everybody except one man — Mordecai.

(Esther 3:5) “And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath.”

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There was some backbone in that old Jew. He was made of stern stuff. He was not about to prostrate himself before one so haughty and so depraved as Haman, even if he was the king's favorite.

- Haman hatched a plan to destroy all the Jews, Mordecai included, and conivingly got Ahasuerus to go along with it. A letter was written and sealed with the king's ring and sent throughout the land, declaring that at a set time all the Jews, men, women, and children, should be slaughtered and their spoils taken.
- When Haman was exalted even more greatly, he built a huge, high gallows upon which to hang Mordecai.

Everything was set. The hated Jews were about to be eliminated. That meant that God's promise could not be fulfilled. His purposes would be foiled. Christ could not come into the world from the seed of Abraham, as he had said. None of his chosen could

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be redeemed. You and I would be forever lost. —
Not a chance!

DIVINE PROVIDENCE

First, this blessed book gives us a great display of God's good, wise, adorable providence. All that had transpired, though it appeared to everyone to be against the God of Israel and his purpose of grace to his people was but the secret working of Divine providence to accomplish his purpose.

(Psalms 76:10) “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.”

Behold the wondrous mystery of God's providence and rejoice (Romans 8:28-30).

(Romans 8:28-30) “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to [his] purpose.”

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“29 ¶ For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate [to be] conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

Divine providence is the direction God gives to every thing, animate and inanimate, good and evil. **It is the sovereign rule of God in the determination of history. It is the hand of God in the glove of history.** Our God is at the steering wheel of this universe. Providence means that God is behind the scenes, shifting, directing, controlling, and manipulating everything for the salvation of his elect and the glory of his own great name (Romans 11:33-36). **Providence is the way God secretly and sovereignly forces all things to do his will.** As recorded in the book of Esther, the entire Jewish nation would have been slain had it not been for the providence of God. **God’s name is not found in the**

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book of Esther; but God is everywhere in the book, standing in the shadows, keeping watch over his own, unseen by men but always there!

“God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds you so much dread
Are big with mercy and will break
With blessings on your head.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

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Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan His works in vain;
God is His own interpreter.
And He will make it plain.”

Let me show you something of the wonder of God’s providence in the book of Esther. We will not read the book now. Time will not permit. I hope you have read it and are familiar with it. Maybe you can read it again before you go to bed tonight. But in this message I will just point you to the highlights.

5 NEEDFUL LESSONS

Here are five needful lessons about God’s providence.

1. **God always puts the right person in the right place at the right time to accomplish his purpose.** He has his servants exactly where he wants them.

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(Esther 4:14) “For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, *then* shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed: and **who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?**”

2. **God restrains evil and governs even his enemies to perform his good pleasure.**

(Proverbs 16:33) “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof [is] of the LORD.”

(Proverbs 21:1) “The king’s heart [is] in the hand of the LORD, [as] the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.”

3. **He arranges the smallest, most minute things to accomplish his great purpose** (Matthew 10:30).

(Matthew 10:30) “But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.”

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- When Esther decided to go into the king's court, uninvited, he just happened to pass by (5:1).
- In chapter 6 we are told that one night, the king just could not sleep, so he had his servant to bring out the chronicles of the kingdom and read them. These chronicles contained the records of 127 provinces. The servant just happened to read the chronicle of Shushan.

(Esther 6:1-3) “On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king. (2) And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus. (3) And the king said, **What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this?** Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him.”

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- About that time Haman walked in, and the king asked him, “*What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honor?*” And Haman gave the counsel that would destroy him, exalt Mordecai, and save the Jews!
- 4. Now, watch this: — **When God is about to do a great work for us and with us, he moves his people to seek him** (Esther 4:16).

(Esther 4:16) “Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and **fast ye for me**, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which *is* not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.”

- 5. **Our God always accomplishes his purpose.**
 - What wonders are unseen!
 - How safe we are!
 - We have a Guardian in the King’s Palace!

PICTURES OF GRACE

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Second, the book of Esther gives us several instructive pictures of grace. I am fully aware that typology can be strained, and often is, making passages Scriptures say what they do not say. Yet, we are assured that **everything written in the Book of God speaks distinctly of our Lord Jesus Christ and the things he has accomplished for us as our Substitute** (Luke 24:27, 44-45). Christ crucified is “*all the counsel of God*” (1 Corinthians 2:2; Acts 20:27).

1. **Esther’s Intercession for Israel** (4:16)

Here is one willing to lay down her life for her people, interceding before the king as one pure and lovely and delightful in his sight. — Who can read that and not think of our blessed Savior, who willingly laid down his life for us? Our great Mediator was not only willing to lay down his life for his people, he did it; and that which he accomplished in laying down his life for us is the basis of his

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relentless intercession for us in heaven (1 John 2:1-2).

2. The Golden Scepter (5:2)

(Esther 5:2) “And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, *that* she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that *was* in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre.”

What a beautiful type this is for each of us in our approaches to God! **Here is a picture that should give great encouragement to us in approaching the throne of grace, the throne of Christ our King, to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need** (Hebrews 4:16).

We urge sinners to venture all at the throne of grace, suing for mercy, with Esther’s attitude, “*I will go into the king’s presence, and if I perish, I perish.*” But it is impossible for a sinner to perish at the throne

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of grace. **None ever perished confessing his sin and seeking God's forgiveness at the footstool of mercy.** God is faithful to his promises and just to his Son “*to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness* (1 John 1:9). He “*delighteth in mercy*” (Mic. 7:17). — “*Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness*” (Nehemiah 9:17).

Come humble sinner, in whose breast
A thousand thoughts revolve;
Come with your guilt and fear oppressed,
And make this last resolve.

“I’ll go to Jesus, though my sins
Like mountains round me close;
I know His courts, I’ll enter in,
Whatever may oppose.

“Prostrate I’ll lie before His throne,
And there my guilt confess;
I’ll tell Him I’m a wretch undone
Without His sovereign grace.”

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I'll to the gracious King approach,
Whose scepter pardon gives;
Perhaps He may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives!

Perhaps He will admit my plea,
Perhaps will hear my prayer;
But if I perish, I will pray,
And perish only there.

I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try;
For if I stay away, I know,
I must forever die.

But if I die with mercy sought,
When I the King have tried,
This were to die (Delightful thought!) —
As sinner never died!”

**As we bow before his throne, confessing our sins,
trusting his Son, the holy Lord God graciously**

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forgives us, receives us, and accepts us because of the God-Man who sits at his right hand, and ever lives to intercede for sinners. In his name we may come boldly and obtain mercy. Do you have some great need in your soul, a need that only Christ can fill? The King's court stands open; enter and lodge your petition. Order your cause before the King! He will hear the voice of your supplication. The golden scepter is extended. He will answer with the all the resources of his omnipotence, wisdom, goodness, and grace!

3. **The Decree Sealed with the King's Ring** (8:8)

(Esther 8:8) “Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal *it* with the king's ring: for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse.”

There is One whose decree is unalterable, whose purpose is sure, whose will cannot be denied, even

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God our Savior (Psalm 89:34; Isaiah 46:9-10; Daniel 4:34-35).

(Psalms 89:34) “My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.”

(Isaiah 46:9-10) “Remember the former things of old: for I [am] God, and [there is] none else; [I am] God, and [there is] none like me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times [the things] that are not [yet] done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.”

(Daniel 4:34-37) “And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion [is] an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom [is] from generation to generation: 35 And all the inhabitants of the earth [are] reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in

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the army of heaven, and [among] the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? 36 At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. 37 Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works [are] truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.”

4. **The Jews Ruling Their Enemies** (Romans 16:20)

(Esther 9:1) “Now in the twelfth month, that *is*, the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king’s commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, (though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them.)”

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God's elect are made to rule over their enemies by his grace (Romans 6:14; Galatians 5:16-23); and we shall ultimately rule over all their foes (Romans 16:20; Revelation 20:6).

5. Mordecai Seeking the Good of His People

(Esther 10:3) “For Mordecai the Jew *was* next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed.”

How instructive this is for you and me! Mordecai exemplifies that which every believer ought to practice. May God ever give us grace to live for the good of his people, seeking their peace and prosperity. **But there is One greater than Mordecai** at the right hand of the Majesty on high, great and “*accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed.*”

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We read in Esther 9:4 that — “*Mordecai [was] great in the king’s house, and his fame went out throughout all the provinces: for this man Mordecai waxed greater and greater.*”

Ahasuerus asked Haman, — “*What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honor?*” (Esther 6:6). And here we read of the great honor bestowed upon Mordecai. **What, then, shall be done to the God-man whom Jehovah the King of kings, delighteth to honor?** Let every knee bow before him, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father! Does the great God delight that our Lord Jesus should be so honored? It is his honor when his Son is honored! It is his glory that Christ is glorified!

We not only praise our adorable Redeemer when we come to him for all things, and trust him for all things; but our poverty and emptiness afford occasion for him to get glory by us, in giving us all

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things and blessing us in all things. **Robert Hawker** wrote...

“This is the only way, and a blessed way it is indeed, by which a poor sinner can give glory to the Father, in believing the record which he hath given of his Son. Here then, my soul, do thou daily be found in honoring the glory-man, the God-man, Christ Jesus, whom God the Father delighteth to honor.”

By all his works of providence and grace, our Mordecai, our Lord Jesus Christ waxes greater and greater in the eyes of his people! And so it shall ever be.

(Revelation 5:9-14) “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; 10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. 11

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And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; 12 Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. 13 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, [be] unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. 14 And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four [and] twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.”

These are two comfortable pillows upon which I delight to rest my soul...

- The Providence of God.
- The Grace of God.
- And a third — The Glory of God My Savior!

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Amen!

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Reading: *Nehemiah 1:1-11*