

God's Providence, therefore Do Not Fret; Christ's Love; and Apathy!

Some weeks ago we looked at Esther 7:1-10 'For Every Deed Will Be Uncovered Whether Good Or Evil'. Haman's murderous plan is brought back upon his own head by God, and with interest! He is "hurried away" by the king's eunuchs" to Esther's second banquet, (chapter 6:14) waiting for the axe to fall! Then as the wine flowed freely, (chapter 7) the king again asks Esther the question, "What is your request?" And as she humbly strokes the King's ego, she lays it all on the line as recorded in v3, "Grant me my life." Immediately she got the king's attention. "Grant you your life? Who dares to threaten the Queen?" Then in v4, (using Haman's own words from his evil decree that was approved by the king) "and spare my people for we have been sold for slaughter and annihilation and destruction." V5 "Who is he? Where is the man who has dared to do such a thing?"

As soon as the words left the king's mouth, with horror, Haman would have realised. *'Oh no, the Queen herself is a Jew. I'm done for!* Esther had gained the king's sympathy and had also fanned the fires of his rage. And then she brings the executioner's blade down upon Haman's neck. V6 "The adversary and enemy is this vile Haman." And I explained that the reality is, that it was the king himself who was to blame! He had signed away the Queen and her people's lives without a second thought. I mentioned, just as we ourselves can often do when we have created a mess, he was looking for someone else to blame.

And I also said we must not forget that as Christians, we too have an enemy and an adversary. It is Satan, and he is after our soul. And he will do everything and anything to get it if that were possible!

V7 The king "flies out in a rage." Not because of the evil plan, but because his own stupidity and impotence as any kind of real leader had been exposed. And he's lost as to what he will now do. He needs to make a decision but who can he now ask? He needs to do that thing which he never does. But in v8 the decision is made for him! "Will he even molest the Queen while she is with me in the house?" Well no, he wasn't that stupid. 8c "As soon as the words left the king's mouth they covered Haman's face." So the would-be executioner had now become to the condemned man! In v9-10, Harbona says, 'Haman has had a gallows built for the man who helped the king.' Then only four words from the king: "Hang him on it." And they do so, "and the king's fury subsided."

This is where we pick up the text this morning. Esther 8"1-8 'God's Providence: Do Not Fret! Christ's Love! And Apathy!' V1 "That same day king Xerxes gave Queen Esther the estate of Haman, the enemy of the Jews." Yes "That same day." The day after the first banquet at the Queen's palace. And Haman's encounter with Mordecai at the king's gate, him being "enraged" when Mordecai refused to pay him homage on his way home. The day his wife and counsellors tell him to "build a gallows 75 feet high, to hang Haman on. *Great idea* he thinks. And that night the king couldn't sleep! He calls for the chronicles to be brought in and read to him. The place where Mordecai has saved the King's life and yet not been rewarded his found. At that very moment Haman arrives looking for permission to execute Mordecai. He is summoned, "What should be done for the man the king delights to honour?" The king asks. *It must be me*, Haman thinks to himself. *Do such and such* he suggests. *Great plan the king says, do it all for Mordecai the Jew!*

So Mordecai is lauded throughout Susa by Haman's own voice no less, and then he goes back to work as Haman goes "home with his face covered." You're done for, his wife and friends tell him. "While they are still speaking Haman hurried away!" The Queen reveals her "petition and request" and who she is, a Jew. Haman is exposed, he is hung on the gallows, and the "king's fury subsides."

Then Chapter 8:1 says "That same day." Friends, the Omnipotent hand, (or the All Powerful) invisible hand of the Sovereignty of God is so clearly evident here. Everything happening at just the right time, God's time. You see God's Providence for your life is always perfect. We can often be thinking to ourselves, *Why me? Why now? Why not someone else? Why is there yet another speed bump in my life Lord?*

But The thing is Beloved, what we must understand though we fail to see it at times, is that God is at work! Yes "That same day king Xerxes gave Queen Esther the estate of Haman." The enemy and adversary had been swallowed up, having paid for his treachery against God with his very life. And now his vast wealth and estate of which he loved to boast, has been handed over to Esther!

In Psalm 37:1-10 we read, "Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong, for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away. Trust in the Lord and do good, dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust in him and he will do this, he will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun. Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him, do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. Refrain from anger and turn from wrath, do not fret, it leads only to evil. For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land. A little while, and the wicked will be no more, though you look for them, they will not be found."

Yes, "Do not fret." "Do not fret." "Do not fret." V3 "Trust in the Lord. V4 "Delight yourself in the Lord." V5 "Commit your way to the Lord." V7 "Be still before the Lord." Yes although we might not see it Brethren, God is at work. In your life, in my life. In the lives of every man, woman and child on the planet. Whether that be for Redemption and Deliverance, or Condemnation and Judgement! King David tells us, "Do not fret," three times in ten verses. David knew what it was like to "Fret." Maligned by his brothers. Pursued by his father in law King Saul relentlessly. Pursued by his enemies. Even pursued by his own son Absalom. Yes, he knew what the sadness of the soul was, and looked like. He'd often "walked through the valley of the shadow of death." And yet when he did so, he also knew where to turn!

Psalm23:4-5 "Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for Thou art with me. Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies, thou anointest my head with oil, my cup overflows." You see David understood that "the shadow of death" is all that remains of sin`s curse for the believer. And a "shadow" can never do you harm. And also, that a "shadow" can only fully appear, when the light is shining!

"That same day." Before which there must have been tremendous fretting and anguish and fear, throughout the whole of the 50 million strong Persian Empire, by the then Jewish nation of Israel! Only the day before, God's people had been earmarked for "annihilation," even genocide by their enemy Haman. But now he hangs up on the gallows that he had built for Mordecai, Esther owns his estate, she has "revealed her relation to Mordecai," and now he now stands in Haman`s place!

Beloved, I don't know what it is that you are going through right now. The things that you are facing or what your deepest fears are. But what I do now is this: God hasn't abandoned you. He knows who you are, where you are and why you are there at this time. And also that He is at work in and through all of those things, bringing about His good plan for your life! We have been seeing it unfolding in these verses for God`s people Brothers and Sisters, and it is no different for you and !! V1b "And Mordecai came into the presence of the king, for Esther had told how he was related to

her. V2 “The king took off his signet ring which he had reclaimed from Haman, and presented it to Mordecai. And Esther placed Mordecai over Haman’s estate.” Again, in the Hands of God, how quickly the tide can turn about within our lives.

But we do need to understand, that though vindication may well come to us in this life, (in whatever the situation may be that we find ourselves) but that it is not what we are promised. No! Nearly all of the apostles were martyred for their faith, and it continues to be that way for many of our brethren throughout the world today. And of course Jesus Himself in reality knew only the Cross in this life. But ultimately, vindication will be ours in the presence of the King! So now we seek to live in this world, as we are Exhorted by Him to do. We are to live as His people who are just passing through!

In Psalm 24:3-5 we read, “Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false. He will receive blessing from the Lord and vindication from God his Saviour!” Yes as I mentioned last time Beloved, 24 hours is a long time in politics. But Esther’s job is not yet done! V3 “Esther again pleaded with the king falling at his feet and weeping. She begged him to put an end to the evil plan of Haman the Agagite, which he had devised against the Jews.” The commentator Duguid explains that during her first request, Esther was very measured and controlled. She had chosen her words very carefully. Even using Haman’s own words from his evil edict against him.

Well now she and Mordecai were safe, but the job was not yet finished! Before when she had put herself first, “Grant me my life,” I have no doubt that she spoke in this way to have the greatest impact. But this time, (as she again plays is her life on the line, remember nothing has changed, for such an approach to the king unless he point the golden sceptre at her) it meant certain death. But this time she is more fervent. She “falls at his feet.” “She weeps.” “She begs.” If you remember Haman, had done the very thing in v7 of the last chapter. “But Haman, realising that the king had already decided his fate, stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life.” And yet as we know it was to no avail! Yes very similar instances, and yet with two very different motives and outcomes.

Did you notice? Haman’s plea was all about himself and his own life and yet he failed. While Esther’s appeal was all about her people. About their lives, and she found success! We can now see that her heart, (of let’s say perhaps indifference to her people, before when she lived in her ivory tower) has completely changed. She leaves nothing in the bag, she lays it all on the line. She “Falls at his feet.” “She weeps.” “She begs.” Not for herself, but for her people!

O Beloved, what a crystal clear picture we have before us of Jesus in Esther. Jesus when in the Garden of Gethsemane in Matthew 26:37-39 “He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. ‘My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow, to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.’ Going a little farther he fell to the ground and prayed. ‘Father if it’s possible, take this cup from me. Yet not my will but thine be done.’” You see in his humanity, “the shadow of death” in all its fullness at that time, hung heavy over our Lord. He felt as though his life might leave him there and then!

Friends, similarly as we read in Genesis 6:6 “The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth and his heart was filled with pain.” This verse also in Matthew 26, is beyond our understanding I believe. That the Creator of the entire universe was so “overwhelmed with sorrow” that in his humanity, he felt as though he were dying. And even three times, He petitioned His Father, that “if it’s possible take this cup from me.” Yes in His humanity Jesus cries out that if there is another way Father, make it known to Me. And yet even so “Not my will but yours be done.” O friends, what a

Saviour we have that knows us so well, and understands us so well. Because He has walked this road of life as we do. He was tempted in every way as we are, and understands our every emotion, and trial and fear that we have. I've explained before, that it wasn't Jesus` Deity that enabled Him to live such a life of obedience. No, it was in His humanity, that He delivered us from death! He is described as the second Adam, who came to restore that which the first Adam had destroyed by sin. Which is our broken relationship with God. And He would go to the Cross, "unlike Esther who knew not her people personally) but with the name I believe, of everyone of us upon His lips and in His heart! "Father forgive them for they know not what they do" He said. And also, "It is finished."

Yes what a crystal clear picture we have here before us in Esther of the Lord Jesus. As she pleads with the king for her people, God's people. As she "falls before" the king. As "she weeps." "As she begs." O king v3, "put an end to the evil plan of Haman the Agagite, which he had devised against the Jews." And let's again remember, she was putting her life on the line. She had not permission for such an approach or display before their king. Notice in v4 "Then the king extended the gold sceptre to Esther and she arose and stood before him." If he had not have done this, she would have surely been put to death.

Yes what a clear picture of Jesus. She's prepared to give her all, even her very life, for her people. No she would not be left wondering. She would rescue them or perish in the attempt! "For greater love hath no man than this, that he laid down his life for his friends," Jesus said. And she uses that same humble and yet masterful approach. "If it pleases the king she said, and if he regards me with favour and believes it is the right thing to do, and if he is pleased with me, let an order be written overruling the dispatches that Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, devised and wrote to destroy the Jews in all the king`s provinces."

And notice that she expresses her appeal by making it all centred around herself! She knew very well that the king cared very little about anyone else other than himself. Let alone subjects that he didn't know personally. "And if he regards ME with favour." "And if he is pleased with ME." Yes she uses the king`s affection for her to get him to act. "For how can I bear to see such a disaster fall upon my people? How can I bear to see the destruction of my family?" And if we break the king`s response down, apart from his affection toward Esther and esteem for Mordecai, his response really is all about indifference! V7 "King Xerxes replied to queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, 'Because Haman attacked the Jews, I have given his estate to Esther, and they have hanged him on the gallows."

But I don't believe that this is actually true. As we saw some weeks ago, I said that I believe that Haman is dead because his actions have exposed the impotence and inadequacies of the king. And if we read between the lines here, he's basically saying, *I've done away with Haman, I have put your uncle in his place, and I have given you his whole world. What more can I do?* And although he is indifferent to the situation, but because of his regard for Esther he says v8 "Now write another decree in the king`s name." Again he doesn't make the decree, he doesn't even need to see the decree, he basically gives another flick pass. There is no true leadership in him. "Now write another decree in the king`s name on behalf of the Jews as seems best to you, and seal it with the king signet ring, for no document written in the king`s name and sealed with his ring can be revoked." He`s like many of our politicians today isn't he? Plausible deniability they call it. Who me? Oh no, that has nothing to do with me. I never saw that!

Friends, how very few people there seems to be in positions of power and authority in our country today, with any real sense of integrity and selfless duty for crown and country. With a real spine. Who will look us squarely in the eyes and answer every question put to them, with straightforward

language, and not spin and avoidance. As I said last time, Xerxes would do well in Australian politics today. For example during that sham of an inquiry in Victoria over quarantine conditions when over 800 deaths from COVID-19. Not one person in all of the hierarchy within the government, would admit to anything. It was clearly obvious that they all lied through their teeth. Daniel Andrews' words. *Oh I don't recall. I can't remember. Not my department. I never saw any of it!* And yet it does seem that these are the kind of people that we want in Australia today. Because they keep getting elected. The more the deceit, the more the approval rates rise!

Anyway, as I said, here is yet another flick pass from king Xerxes. *Esther you and your uncle do what seems best to you, I don't need to know or be involved. Mordecai has my ring of authority it's all good!*

The timeline is this: We entered Xerxes' reign in the third year, that same year the search for the new Queen began. The 7th year Esther is crowned. On the 22nd day of the third month of Xerxes' twelfth year, Esther's first banquet. The next day, 23/3/12 the second banquet Haman is hanged, Mordecai installed as grand vizier, Esther gets Haman's estate, and the drafting of the edict begins!

Brothers and sisters, so far this morning we have witnessed the invisible hand of God orchestrating all things for the salvation and the deliverance of his people. Therefore we must not fret in the midst of His Providence. And all of those things coming about at His pre-appointed time! We have seen that crystal clear picture of Christ's Garden of Gethsemane Love for His people, mirrored in Esther's thinking not of herself, but even being prepared to lose everything even her own life for her people. God's own people!

And finally, we have seen what I am calling, the indifference of the king. *Esther and Mordecai, do what you need to do. I'm fine with it all, but I don't need to know!* Friends, something about the king's apathy and seeking to have blissful ignorance, really struck a chord in me. Because this is exactly how we are, (when we are apart from Jesus) in relation to God's Word. And sadly, even once we have been saved and delivered from death to life, we are often no different! Yes until God sends His Holy Spirit to hover over our souls as He did those primordial waters in Genesis 1, our response to Christ's call of "Come, Repent and be saved." Means nothing to us. And although it is in our God ordained DNA, to recognise that God exists, and that we have been created to be in relationship with Him, and to submit to His Rule and Authority, we don't want to hear it and we don't want to know! Similarly, like Xerxes with Esther, we say in our hearts, 'I don't need to know. You've got your religion and I've got mine.' Now that's bad enough Beloved, but the greater tragedy, and the greater offence before God, is that once we have laid claim to Christ's life, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven. When we do hear His word preached to us by faithful men, we feel no need to respond. No need to seek to apply those truths to ourselves. No need to "offer our bodies (as we read in Romans 12) as living sacrifices. No need "to be transformed by the renewing of our minds." To know "what God's will is. His good pleasing and perfect will." Yes although we know these things to be true, we are indifferent. We don't want to really know. We are happy listening to the messages on a purely intellectual level each Sunday, but all of that stuff is for real sinners. Yes like the people in the lukewarm church at Laodicea in the Book of Revelation, we believe that we have it all. They had wealth, position and recognition. Whereas Jesus tells them that they "are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked."

Oh dear friends, indifference and apathy are key weapons in the devil's armoury. Because when we are apathetic and indifferent to the Word of God, we actually believe that we have all of our spiritual bases covered on our own. But how wrong we are! Esther fell down before the king. Weeping and begging for her people. Jesus "sweat drops of blood" and was "sorrowful to the point of death" for

our redemption and reconciliation, and that was even before he was arrested, mocked, beaten and crucified!

Dear friends, how then should we be affected? How should we respond to the preaching at teaching, of the God Holy Spirit, breathed out Word of God? Should we not be moved? By His word. And His Spirit?

Let's pray.