

Esther Part 5: The Choice

We all have battles when it comes to choices in our life! So often we find there are so many choices we can make when it comes to things:

Truth vs Lies

Good vs Bad

Success vs Failure

Proud vs Humble

The entire book of Esther has really been about two kinds of people: the proud and the humble. It is about what happens to those who are arrogant and what happens to those who are meek. Even though God is not mentioned anywhere in the story, we see His hand at work everywhere, destroying the proud and raising up the humble. The book of Esther could be summarized with two verses.

Proverbs 16:18 says, “Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.”

This is a perfect verse for Haman. The other verse is James 4:10, which says, “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.” This verse is perfect for Esther and Mordecai.

And really, the ending of this story in Esther is a summary of these two themes. Pride leads to destruction, and humility leads to honor. And so, it is a good reminder for us that death to self will come one way or another. Either we destroy our pride and our ego, or God does.

When we left Esther, she was throwing a banquet for the King and Haman!

Esther 5:4

So Esther answered, “If it pleases the king, let the king and Haman come today to the banquet that I have prepared for him. Then the king said, “Bring Haman quickly, that he may do as Esther has said.”

Esther 5:6. At the banquet of wine the king said to Esther, “What is your petition? It shall be granted you. What is your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!”

The banquet was probably not exactly what we think of when we imagine a banquet. It was more like a reception. The food consisted primarily of dainty foods, like desserts and cheeses and fruit and all of it was taken with wine. So, it really was a banquet of wine and dessert. And again, we can be sure that Esther agonized over what to serve, how much, and when to serve which dishes. She maybe even considered the decorations on the table and the music in the room. She wanted the setting to be just right when she presented her request to the king.

The king, as we mentioned, knows that this is not the request that Esther wanted to make of the king, and so asks her again, “What is your request?” His curiosity continues to ripen.

Esther 5:7. Then Esther answered and said, “My petition and request is this...”
Can you feel the tension? Everybody is holding their breath.

Esther 5:8

If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, then let the king and Haman come to the banquet which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said.

She didn't ask again! She is really dragging this out! Why won't she just ask? Wouldn't this make a great movie? The tension builds and builds and just when we think Esther is going to make her request, she invites the King and Haman to another banquet.

Some of us might think she is just putting off the inevitable, and it would have been better for her just to get it over with. But again, we are going to see that God is working behind the scenes and he needed just 24 more hours to add an amazing twist to the plot of this story.

Esther 5:9-14

⁹⁻¹³ Haman left the palace that day happy, beaming. And then he saw Mordecai sitting at the King's Gate ignoring him, oblivious to him. Haman was furious with Mordecai.

Haman has just been honored above every other man in the kingdom with a private banquet with the King and Queen. He is feeling joyful and high spirited. He's probably a little drunk.

As he leaves the King's Palace though, there is Mordecai. Haman has just been to a banquet with the king and queen. Everyone is bowing to Haman, everyone but Mordecai. And just like that, Haman's day is ruined. He was filled with rage and indignation against Mordecai. He probably wanted to kill Mordecai then and there.

¹⁴ His wife Zeresh and all his friends said, "Build a gallows seventy-five feet high. First thing in the morning speak with the king; get him to order Mordecai hanged on it. Then happily go with the king to dinner." Haman liked that. He had the gallows built.

And these gallows, intended for Mordecai, was not any normal gallows. It was 50 cubits high, which is about 75 feet high. Haman didn't do anything half way. It wasn't enough for him just to want Mordecai dead. He wanted all the Israelite people dead. It wasn't enough for him just to hang Mordecai on any old gallows, he wanted to hang Mordecai 75 feet in the air.

And Haman will hang Mordecai on it before tomorrow's banquet with Esther and the King! Isn't this a wonderfully-told story? Esther delayed in making her request to the king. Now it appears that her delay will cost Mordecai his life! Esther may be saved, and the Jews might get spared, but by the time Esther makes her request, Mordecai will already be dead.

But God is in control, and though Haman builds the gallows, we will see that it is actually God who wanted the gallows built. What is that purpose? We don't know yet. The text has not answered that question for us yet.

"Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall." We will definitely see this in Haman. But what about us? Do you look down on others? Those of you who are in a position of authority at work, do you treat those under you as inferiors, or do you give them the respect they deserve?

Respect is a gift that we can offer anyone, anywhere.

Do not let your pride take control. Pride comes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Esther 6:1

That night the king could not sleep. So, one was commanded to bring the book of the records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king.

Susa, of course, is the royal city that the king was living in, and on this night, he could not sleep. I just find this amazing! “The entire course of history for the Jewish nation was changed because a pagan king could not sleep.”

The king wanted to sleep, but we see here in verse one that he could not, and so he orders that the history books be brought in and read to him. Now some of us are thinking, “Yeah, read some history. That’ll put you to sleep really quick.” But these were not just any history books, these were the history books of his reign. These were the accounts of what he had done, and all the glorious battles he had won and all the wonderful buildings he had built and so on.

The King got to the part where Mordecai had saved him from the two men that wanted to kill him. He found that Mordechai was never rewarded for what had happen. So, he called out to his advisors to see who is able to come and Haman was out in the hallway.

When Haman entered, the king said, “What would be appropriate for the man the king especially wants to honor?” Haman thought to himself, “He must be talking about honoring me—who else?” So, he answered the king, “For the man the king delights to honor, do this: Bring a royal robe that the king has worn and a horse the king has ridden, one with a royal crown on its head. Then give the robe and the horse to one of the king’s most noble princes. Have him robe the man whom the king especially wants to honor; have the prince lead him on horseback through the city square, proclaiming before him, ‘This is what is done for the man whom the king especially wants to honor!’”

¹⁰ “Go and do it,” the king said to Haman. “Don’t waste another minute. Take the robe and horse and do what you have proposed to Mordecai the Jew who sits at the King’s Gate. Don’t leave out a single detail of your plan.”

How humiliating is this?? This whole situation is hysterical!

Esther 6:14

While they were still talking with him, the king’s eunuchs came, and hastened to bring Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared.

So, Haman is escorted off to his banquet with Esther and the King.

Esther 7 The Message (MSG)

³ Queen Esther answered, “If I have found favor in your eyes, O King, and if it pleases the king, give me my life, and give my people their lives. ⁴ “We’ve been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed—sold to be massacred, eliminated. If we had just been sold off into slavery, I wouldn’t even have brought it up; our troubles wouldn’t have been worth bothering the king over.”

⁵ King Xerxes exploded, “Who? Where is he? This is monstrous!” ⁶ “An enemy. An adversary. This evil Haman,” said Esther. Haman was terror-stricken before the king and queen. ⁷⁻⁸ The king, raging, left his wine and stalked out into the palace garden. Haman stood there pleading with Queen Esther for his life—he could see that the king was finished with him and that he was doomed.

As the king came back from the palace garden into the banquet hall, Haman was groveling at the couch on which Esther reclined. The king roared out, “Will he even molest the queen while I’m just around the corner?” When that word left the king’s mouth, all the blood drained from Haman’s face.

⁹ Harbona, one of the eunuchs attending the king, spoke up: “Look over there! There is the gallows that Haman had built for Mordecai, who saved the king’s life. It’s right next to Haman’s house—seventy-five feet high!” The king said, “Hang him on it!” ¹⁰ So Haman was hanged on the very gallows that he had built for Mordecai. And the king’s hot anger cooled.

The story continues and talks about how God saves the Jewish people and elevates Mordecai to a position of power. One thing we have to understand is that God was always working.

The story of Esther reminds us of God’s wisdom and protection. Remember that this is the story of God working behind the scenes. We talked about this the very first week. We don’t see God in this story.

We started this sermon talking about pride and humility.

Do you see the two extremes in this wonderful story? Haman tried to exalt himself and ended up dying, along with all of his plans coming to nothing, and all of his sons being put to death. Esther, on the other hand, remember what she said in [Esther 4](#)? “If I perish, I perish.”

She was willing to die in order to do what was right, and yet she was honored and blessed and raised up as queen, with her family and her people being raised up to honor with her.

Those are the two options. Each has its own result.

Haman, in trying to get what he wanted, ended up dying anyway.

Esther, in giving up herself for others, was blessed and honored.

[Mark 8:36](#) says, “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?”

The story ends right where it began, but completely backward! We have the same king and the same city we started with. However, Vashti is no longer queen. Instead, a humble young Jewish girl has risen to prominence. Proud Haman is no longer second in command, and his plan to annihilate the Jews ended in his own destruction. Instead of Haman, humble Mordecai has been raised up, and is now bringing peace and prosperity to the Persian empire in a way previously unknown.

So, who are you, Haman or Mordecai and Esther?

None of us want to be a Haman. Yet, we often act like him. Doing whatever it takes to get our plans moved forward, no matter who it hurts. Conniving, scheming, planning, plotting. Looking out for number 1.

Doing whatever we need to at work to make sure we get that promotion, and not somebody else. Talking about ourselves to everybody else. In short, revealing pride and arrogance. But as we have seen, pride comes before destruction.

But we don't want to be like that. We want to be like Esther and Mordecai. They simply did what was asked of them. They humbly and quietly went about their business, obeying God and doing what was right. And God, in His own timing and in His own way, raised them up to positions of honor and prominence that nobody could have ever imagined.

God will do that for you too, if you follow His ways, wait for His timing, and trust Him with your life and your decisions.

That is the lesson of Esther. When God seems absent in your life, keep trusting Him to do what He has promised. If you remain humble and dependent upon Him, dying to self and living for Him (Gal 2:20), He will raise you up and bring honor to you as only He can.