

A Lack of Wisdom

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[0:00] Let's turn to the book of Esther as we're beginning a study in this book, chapter one for tonight. You'll forgive me if I don't pronounce all the Persian names correctly in the chapter.

! I'm not Persian, but God did a wonderful thing in this place, real places that we read of in God's real world where he reigns.

Esther chapter one. This is what happened during the time of Xerxes, the Xerxes who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Kush. At that time, King Xerxes reigned from his royal throne in the citadel of Susa.

And in the third year of his reign, he gave a banquet for all his nobles and officials, the military leaders of Persia and Media, the princes and the nobles of the provinces were present.

For a full 180 days, he displayed the vast wealth of his kingdom and the splendor and glory of his majesty.

[1:00] When these days were over, the king gave a banquet lasting seven days in the enclosed garden of the king's palace for all the people from the least to the greatest who were in the citadel of Susa.

The garden had hangings of white and blue linen, fastened with cords of white linen and purple material to silver rings on marble pillars.

There were couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother of pearl and other costly stones. Wine was served in goblets of gold, each one different from the other.

And the royal wine was abundant in keeping with the king's liberality. By the king's command, each guest was allowed to drink in his own way, for the king instructed all the wine stewards to serve each man what he wished.

Queen Vashti also gave a banquet for the women in the royal palace of King Xerxes. On the seventh day, when King Xerxes was in high spirits from the wine, he commanded the seven eunuchs who served him, and the king's queen of the king's command, and the king was in high spirits from the king's command.

[2:22] To bring before him Queen Vashti, wearing her royal crown, in order to display her beauty to the people and nobles, for she was lovely to look at.

But when the attendants delivered the king's command, Queen Vashti refused to come. Then the king became furious and burned with anger. Since it was customary for the king to consult experts in matter of law and justice, he spoke with the wise men who understood the times and were closest to the king, Karshana, Shethar, Admetha, Tarshish, Meres, Marcina, and Mamucan, the seven nobles of Persia and Media, who had special access to the king and were highest in the kingdom.

According to the law, what must be done to Queen Vashti, he asked. She has not obeyed the command of King Xerxes that the eunuchs have taken to her.

Then Mamucan replied in the presence of the king and the nobles, Queen Vashti has done wrong, not only against the king, but also against all nobles and the peoples of all the provinces of King Xerxes.

For the king's, the queen's conduct will become known to all the women. And so they will despise their husbands and say, King Xerxes commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, but she would not come.

[3:49] This very day, the Persian and Median woman, women of the nobility who have heard about the queen's conduct, will respond to all the king's nobles in the same way.

There will be no end of disrespect and discord. Therefore, if it pleases the king, let him issue a royal decree and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media, which cannot be repealed, that Vashti is

never again to enter the presence of King Xerxes.

Also let the king give her royal position to someone else who is better than she. Then when the king's edict is proclaimed throughout all his vast realm, all the women will respect their husbands from the least to the greatest.

The king and his nobles were pleased with this advice. So the king did as Mamukum proposed. He sent dispatches to all parts of the kingdom, to each province in its own script and to each people in its own language, proclaiming in each people's tongue that every man should be ruler over his own household.

Please keep your Bibles open there to Esther chapter 1. It seems as though it's mandatory. It's not really, but it seems that way sometimes.

[5 : 13] That it's mandatory that men and women ignore wisdom that has been handed down and try to learn from themselves by making the same mistakes that people that have gone before them have made.

People seem bent on learning the hard way. Making the same mistakes that their parents made. Making the same mistakes that people in Scripture made.

And ignoring the abundant warnings that have been given to them. Whether from the pages of Scripture, or by their parents, or by their pastors, or from their friends.

Throughout the history of the world, people, especially young people it seems, have been doomed to repeat the mistakes of those who have gone before because they refuse to listen to the warnings of those same people that have gone before them.

There's a stupid fascination, I think, with learning the hard way for ourselves. Much pain and suffering could be avoided if we would simply heed some of Solomon's pleas.

[6 : 18] Chapters 1-9 of Proverbs. He's pleading with his son, Follow the way of wisdom, and avoid the way of folly. And then the rest of Proverbs, he tells you what the way of wisdom is. But those first nine chapters, Walk in the way of wisdom.

Please, my son, listen to me. Walk in the way. And if you do, you will avoid a world of heartache, and hurt, and pain, and agony, and suffering. Just listen to my example.

Listen to my words, and see the mistakes I've made. Just listen to one of his pleas from Proverbs 4. My son, pay attention to what I say. Listen closely to my words.

Do not let them out of your sight. Keep them within your heart, for they are life to those who find them, and health to a man's whole body. Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

Put away perversity from your mouth. Keep corrupt talk far from your lips. Let your eyes look straight ahead. Fix your gaze directly before you make level paths for your feet, and take only ways that are firm.

[7 : 23] Do not swerve to the right or to the left. Keep your foot from evil. There's life and prosperity and following the way of wisdom.

Trust me. You don't have to learn the hard way for yourself. You get on the way of wisdom right now, and you avoid all these pitfalls. And eventually avoid death itself.

Because the way of folly always, always, always ends in death. The way of wisdom always ends in life. And there's a great danger in living a life that's devoid of wisdom.

wisdom. Because you've ignored the warnings of those that have gone before. The examples that have gone before you. And the story of King Xerxes, or Ahasuerus, or whatever you'd like to call him, since our translations say Xerxes, that's what we're going to call him here.

But the story of this man is an example of someone who is devoid of wisdom. Now, he didn't have somebody like Solomon to raise him, to instruct him in his words, but he had seen Persian kings come and go.

[8 : 31] He certainly knew the history of his own empire. And seen the mistakes that kings before him had made. Had heard the stories of how other empires had fallen before him, and the mistakes that they had made.

There were plenty of examples for this man to learn from. Maybe he didn't have access to the wisdom of Solomon, but he could have learned something from those that have gone before. But when we see this man trying to rule his kingdom, it's obvious to us that he didn't learn.

That he didn't pay attention. There's a man without wisdom. Just imagine for a moment if Xerxes had listened to a little bit of wisdom from Proverbs, since that's one of the key sources for wisdom.

In our Bibles. Just think if he had heeded this. It's not for kings, O Lemuel. Not for kings to drink wine. Not for rulers to crave beer.

Lest they drink and forget what the law decrees. And to bribe all the oppressed of their rights. Man, if you just... And surely he knew that.

[9:34] It's not going to be a good idea for a king to get drunk, and then try to figure out what to do when something happens. Man, just a little wisdom would have gone so far to avoid the situation that we see here in Esther.

Pride goes before a fall. A haughty spirit before destruction. Man, Xerxes, this whole 180 day feast, it's all about pride. It's all about, look at how great I am.

Look at how vast my kingdom is. Look at how much money I have. Look at how generous I am to feed you all for all this great length of time. And to have abundant wine at the king's sake. Pretty pleased with himself.

Pretty puffed up at all the compliments he's gotten at how nice the palace looks. And how wealthy he is. There's six things that the Lord hates, Xerxes. Seven things that are an abomination to him. One is haughty eyes. Pride again. Number four is a heart that devises wicked schemes. Better be careful, Xerxes. Those around him would have done well to heed the warnings of wisdom.

[10:36] A king's wrath is like the roar of a lion. He who angers him forfeits his life. Don't anger the king. Are you going to lose your life? A king delights in a wise servant.

But a shameful servant incurs his wrath. You're going to need to surround yourself with some wise servants. It seems that Xerxes had a little bit of wisdom. He understood that for lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisors make victory.

Sure. He just surrounded himself with the wrong advisors, it looks like. These aren't the wisest of men he's got surrounding him. Either that or they're too drunk to know the difference, as we'll see. A little wisdom could have gone a long ways for Xerxes. Paying attention to those that had gone before so he didn't have to repeat their mistakes. You remember that prideful show we talked about last week.

After those six months and seven days, the man's ego is pretty inflated. Seven days of drinking abundant wine. And his mind is not what it should be.

[11:38] And we're about to see the devastating effects in the rest of chapter one. Ian Duguid says this. The world is a dangerous place where power and wisdom are frequently unconnected.

The world is a dangerous place where power and wisdom are frequently unconnected. Here's a great, powerful man, Xerxes. But he's not wise. And that means the whole kingdom is in danger. And so we look around the world around us. And we see leaders in positions of authority and power. And it seems that they're divorced and devoid of any sort of wisdom. And such a world is a dangerous place.

We'll see why it isn't dangerous for the Christian, though. I'm going to jump to the end. This isn't like on my last page of notes. Because wisdom and power are found perfectly together in our God. And so though there are many men on thrones around the world that are in positions of power without wisdom, the one on the throne that matters, the throne of heaven, is both wise and powerful.

[12:45] And all that he does is good and just and right. And he makes no mistakes. And so even what we see here, God allowing a man like this to be on the throne, is within his plan.

And he's bringing it to pass according to his good and perfect will. They have given it away. But I'm not going to stop there. We have four things that we want to see tonight.

We want to see the king, the queen, the counselors, and then the congregation. And that's you all. That's me. The king, the queen, the counselors, and the congregation.

First of all, the king. And we're looking at verses 10 to the end of the chapter tonight. And the first thing that we see is his drinking. The seventh day when King Xerxes was in high spirits from wine. Seven days of wine flowing abundantly. They've been drinking. And his heart is glad. It's merry. Literally, his heart is good with wine. In other places, we get the idea that this is just a euphemism for he's drunk out of his mind.

[13:50] Really. He's beyond serious, rational thought. Hosea said of Israel, They've deserted the Lord to give themselves to prostitution, to old wine and new, which take away the understanding.

Hosea says, Israel's given themselves over to wine, and it's taken away their understanding. And that is what an excess of wine will do. It doesn't matter if you're living in Israel or Persia or the

United States.

Giving yourself over to wine. Not drinking it in moderation, but giving yourselves over to it. Being made drunk on it. Takes away your understanding. It removes your capacity to think clearly.

And rightly. And so Matthew Henry rightly says, When the wine is in, the wit is out. And man's reason departs from that. Exactly. And that's why we noted last time, and note again tonight, the danger of too much wine, too much alcohol.

Anytime you are not in control of your rational faculties, your mind, you're opening yourself to thinking, saying, or doing something that is sinful or stupid, that you will regret.

[15:03] In fact, just the drinking yourself into such a state is sinful. And then much sin follows from it. Beware of drinking too much wine. Indulging your appetites.

Beware if your stomach is your God. Because then you will indulge it. Just from a... Take the sin out of the picture for a minute.

Just from a purely human perspective, it's hard to see why a king or a leader or a young person with great aspirations for the future, that wants to do something or be something great, why they would drink themselves into a state where they might do something that will jeopardize all of those dreams and futures.

You know, one foolish thing when you're drunk can undo your whole life. And it comes crumbling down. Whether you're already in that position that you've longed for or whether you haven't gotten it, it can all come undone when you're not thinking clearly.

And then, of course, you can't separate it from the sin aspect of it because it is sinful. And so it's displeasing to God. So why would we do it in the first place? And so there's great danger in such.

[16:16] So may God keep us from it. But besides the king's drinking, we also see his command. What does the wine-happy Xerxes come up with? He's shown off his riches, his beautiful palace, his rich food, his wine that never stops flowing.

There's just one thing left to show off. One thing left to display. Just one more thing. One more possession. And that's his prized beauty. Vashti, the queen.

For a pleasing sight was she. It speaks of her beauty and then it says, a pleasing sight was she. It's the same way that Rebecca is described. It's the same way that Bathsheba is described.

It's what Xerxes will want more of in chapter 2 once Vashti is gone. Someone who is pleasing to the sight. A woman who would catch your eye.

And if you let your eye linger and your mind run, lust would spring up in your heart as it did with David and Bathsheba. Xerxes enjoyed this and would enjoy displaying her just like he did in verse 4.

[17:23] Same word, display. He showed his wealth. Now he's going to show his wife off. He's going to display her like a thing. This is the only place this word is used in this way of a person. Every other place, it's in the animate objects.

Things like his wealth. And so here it's used as a person. You begin to get an idea of what Xerxes thought of his wife. Just another possession. Just another one of his things. Just another sign of his great wealth and power.

Just a thing to be paraded and shown off. And so, the drunk Xerxes sends the seven men with the names that I don't have to pronounce tonight.

Thank you. He sends these seven men to fetch his queen and to bring her in to show her off to a room full of drunken men.

You can guess what sort of display this might be. The queen in her royal attire. Beautiful. With her crown. Brought in.

[18:26] Perhaps like a model on a catwalk. And then there would be cat calls and whistles and degrading comments. That's one way it could go. Perhaps there was such a fear for what Xerxes would do if he did such a thing.

Although, in your drunken state, you don't think clearly about repercussions. So I think that's probably the way it would have been. But maybe it would have just been a quiet admiring of her beauty.

Lusting after her in the heart. And all would be made jealous of Xerxes. If only I could live in this lavish palace. If only I could enjoy this rich food all the time like he does. If only I could have this wine that never ceases.

And a beautiful queen like Vashti. Then my life would be made complete. And it would be a den of iniquity and envy and lust and sin when Vashti would be brought in.

Regardless of what took place, there would be a violation, again, of Solomon's wisdom. He's speaking of a harlot when he says this, but the principle holds true. Do not lust in your heart after her beauty.

[19:27] Don't. Don't lust in your heart. And Xerxes is going to bring her in so everybody can lust after her. And it seems that Xerxes, and probably Vashti as well, and the other men and the women in the kingdom didn't understand Proverbs 31 and verse 30, Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting.

But a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. No fear of the Lord in Persia. None of that. And so, whatever is outward is what matters. Big rich feast. Lots of possessions.

Having a beautiful wife. Being a beautiful woman. These are all that matter to these people. And so, we're distressed at the state of affairs in Persia.

All is not well. And before we move on, I want to stop and pause and speak especially to you young people about what is more important to you. And we'll speak more about this when we get into chapter 2 of Esther.

But what is more important to you? Would you guys rather have a stunning girl on your arm that catches everyone's eye and makes you the envy of all? Or would you rather have a godly woman that fears the Lord?

[20:43] It's not to say a godly woman can't be beautiful. Don't misunderstand. But what matters most to that girl?

And guys, how do you look at girls? The ones in the hall at school. Would you be like this room full of drunken men lusting after their beauty?

Sinning in your heart? Breaking God's command against adultery by sinning in your heart? To look at a young woman, a girl in that way, is not to pay her a compliment.

It is to disrespect and dishonor her. And not to fulfill your role as a man in protecting such women and looking away when you see such a thing.

And you young ladies, do you desire the eyes of men and dress in such a way that you get it? Or do you know and believe that your beauty should not come from outward adornment such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes?

[22:08] Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit which is of great worth in God's sight. What's more important to you?

The way you look? Or whether or not you fear the Lord? Beauty is fleeting, says Solomon. Girls, I'm going to tell you that one day your face will have wrinkles.

Your body will not be what it is now. You'll be terrified to go out dressed like you dress now. The outward is passing and fading.

But your fear of God, your love for the Lord, that can grow and increase your whole life so that when you're 80 years old, you're far more beautiful than you are right now at 18.

And so may God keep us from an obsession with the outward and make us a people that are concerned with what's on the inside.

[23:21] Because Xerxes, Vashti, and everybody else in the kingdom missed it. May you not miss it. May I not miss it. Remember what you heard this morning about examples and following the right example and the wrong example and setting the right sort of example.

Make sure you're not being conformed to the image of the world, but rather being transformed by the renewing of your mind. See how it's the inward again that matters and not the outward.

Well, there's something of the king. We've already begun to speak of the queen, though, and so we look now to the queen and the first thing we see is her refusal. This stunning, beautiful queen receives the request from the king's messengers and not really surprisingly she says, no.

There's no way I'm going to come in to that room full of drunken men and be paraded around. Not a chance that anything like that will happen. And we don't know the reason.

It might seem obvious to us, much as a woman might desire men's eyes upon or the prospect of being displayed as a thing before a room full of drunken men is unappealing even to some woman that wants guys to notice her.

[24:36] That's an unappealing thought. Maybe she wanted to, so she wants to avoid that perhaps. Maybe she wants to flex her power a little bit and show who really wears the pants in the

castle.

Queen Vashti is the one in charge. She's got a little bit of control over the king. Maybe she wants to show her power. The text doesn't tell. She just says no.

But we know that defying a king and especially a drunk king is never a good plan. Whether you're his wife or any other of his subjects. And we saw at the beginning the dangers from Proverbs of rebelling against the king, angering the king, and surely Vashti knows that her husband has been drinking and the sort of state of mind he's going to be in because he's been drinking.

It's probably a lose-lose situation in her mind. If she says yes, she's going to be humiliated before these men and show how powerless she is. And if she says no, the king will be as mad as she's ever seen him.

And she doesn't know what will happen. And so, she chooses perhaps in her mind the lesser of two evils and says no. And the king's response to the queen is not pretty.

[25:44] He's angry. Very much so. His wrath burns within him. No doubt fueled by the wine.

Matthew Henry says he that had rule over 127 provinces had no rule over his own spirit but his anger burned in him.

And the true nature of things in Persia begins to be revealed. A man who can't rule his own house certainly can't be expected to rule a kingdom. And the writer here, the author of Esther, and we don't know who it is, but whoever wrote it is clearly taking a jab at the Persian Empire here.

He's described its vast wealth and this glorious banquet and the richness of the kingdom. But now, the king, he's got a problem. The guy that's ruling over this vast empire can't even get his wife to obey.

So, all is not well in Persia. It's an empire built on a foundation of sandy decrees, issued on whims, and at its head as a weak man.

And before we move on to consider the aftermath of this command and the refusal to obey and the king's anger, a few lessons for husbands and wives seeking to live in right relationship with each other.

[27:06] Now here, it's hard to know exactly what to think since we don't have all the details and the reasoning behind Vashti's saying no. Who is in the wrong? Who is in the right? Where clearly Xerxes gave a wretched command to his wife.

He treats her as an object rather than a fellow human being created in God's image. Clearly, Xerxes is in the wrong. Vashti, perhaps a little bit more difficult to determine. She's deserving of sympathy for having to live with such a difficult man.

But there are no exceptions in Scripture to wives submitting to their husbands just because they're difficult men to live with. The only exception would be if your husband asks you to sin. That would be the only case where you could disobey, not follow the leadership, the headship of your husband. And that may well have been the case here. She certainly would have been causing others to sin whether or not she was sinning herself. But somehow, I don't think Vashti cared about whether she sinned or whether she caused anybody else to sin.

I don't think that was foremost in her mind. And so, if she's just trying to throw off his authority, right action, if it was right, it isn't justified by a wrong motive.

[28:16] Regardless, there's something for us to learn here as husbands and wives. And Esther will be full of little nuggets of insight into the role of women. But here, something on the relationship of husbands and wives.

And we're going to start with us husbands. How do you husbands, and I include myself, how do we husbands treat our wives?

A husband is to have authority over his wife. True. But if husbands were better at loving their wives, as Christ loves the church, that headship, that leadership, that authority in the home might be better received, more happily received.

Would Christ-like, self-sacrificing love parade your wife around like a play thing as Xerxes did? No. Rather, it would protect your wife. It would cherish your wife.

It would keep your wife away from a situation like that. It would guard her. Christ-like love would treat your wife as more important than yourself.

[29:24] That's how Christ treated us, isn't it? He didn't consider Himself when He came to earth and gave up the glory of heaven and came to suffer and die for us.

He wasn't putting His own interests first, was He, husbands? He was putting His bride's interests first, our interests first. Do you do that with your wives? Do you put their interests before their own? Do you love your wife like Christ loved the church? It should be easy for a wife to submit to her husband if every decision is made with her best interest in mind.

That's the kind of leadership that's easy to follow. If He's always considering her best interest. Husbands, is that how you think and operate in the home? Do you listen to and value your wife's wisdom and opinion?

Do you grant your wife honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life? Xerxes' request would have degraded his wife. How do you treat your wife? Ian Duguid says this, If Christian men were more like Christ and less like Ahasuerus, that's Xerxes, if Christian men were more like Christ and less like Ahasuerus, then perhaps we would find our wives more ready to submit to our leadership.

[30:40] How do you husbands treat your wives? How do you wives treat your husbands? Do you lovingly follow and submit to their headship in the home even when they're difficult men to live with?

And we are difficult men to live with. This I know. The only exception would be if they require you to sin.

But do you chafe under the loving headship of your husband or do you sweetly submit? When you have some wisdom and opinion on the matter, do you let it be known sweetly?

Or in such a way that makes your husband want to dismiss it out of hand just because of your attitude and tone of voice? How do you ladies honor your husbands?

Submit to your husbands in the home? Xerxes and Vashti clearly had a dysfunctional marriage. May God keep us from such. And so we've seen the king now.

[31:47] And we've seen the queen. Let's turn for a moment and consider the king's counselors, his advisors, these men who understand the times and are experts in matters of the law, the decrees, and justice.

Now that the king has issued his command, it's been refused by the king and all very publicly there at the feast. Something must be done. And so enter the queen's, the king's very wise counselors, these other seven men.

And I'm only going to talk about one of them because he comes to the forefront. Memucan. Or however you want to pronounce it. And we just see, first of all, their presence, their position there.

These men have access to the king. They're before the face of the king. They live in front of his face, literally. They have access to him. They have his ear. He listens to them. They're in a place at the very head of the kingdom right behind the king.

These are powerful men. He's surrounded himself with advisors that he can ask questions of and expect honest answers from them. These men can speak to the king and sway his mind.

[32:53] They have influence over him. Xerxes wasn't apparently a sluggard who was wiser in his own eyes than seven men who answered discreetly. He had gotten himself seven men to answer questions that he had.

Those who were experts in the law, that's the word for decree. And decree is that word that gets thrown around in the Persian Empire. It's what Darius made and it was irrevocable and so Daniel had to go to the lion's den.

It's what he's going to make here. They throw these decrees around sort of like they're cheap candy. Like it's no big deal. If something comes up, boom, let's make a law. These men are experts in the decrees. They know what's been decreed.

And in justice, so they know what to do when the decrees are violated. The only problem is, and you see this in the advice they give, they weren't the wisest of men. They didn't have a lot of wisdom.

He's surrounded himself with seven men, but not seven wise men. Either that or they're too influenced by the alcohol here. But this too is in the Lord's hands.

[33:57] God bringing all things to pass. The wise, powerful God who sits on His throne. The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord and He turns it wherever He wishes. And the king's advisor's hearts are in the hand of the Lord and He turns those hearts wherever He wishes.

And so even in this foolishness that's coming out of their mouths, God is still on the throne. God is ordering, bringing it to pass just as He wants.

Remember, He's got a Jewish people to save. Haman's going to be plotting their murder in just a couple of chapters and if Vashti's still the queen, Esther doesn't have access to the king and the

Jewish people aren't saved and so they're cut off and there's no Messiah.

Okay, I'm getting ahead of myself again here, but that's where we're headed. God is on the throne even in the midst of this foolishness. God isn't foolish. He is wise and knows what is best.

And so the king has a question for his counselors. What do we do? He's violated my command or the queen has violated my command. According to law, what must be done?

[35:01] According to the decree, what must be done to Queen Vashti? She's not obeyed the command of the king. Is there a decree for such a thing? Is there one of our irrevocable decrees floating around that speaks to the situation?

And there's not. So, what do you do if there's not one? You make one up. We'll make a new one. And we'll just hope for the best, they say.

So Memucan speaks up. Vashti says, hasn't just wronged the king, but she's wronged everybody in the court, in the king's court, and she's wronged everybody in all of the provinces of all of Persia. All 127 provinces, everybody that lives in them, she's sinned against every one of them. All of them. That's pretty big for a woman that just didn't come when her husband called.

But apparently, she's sinned against the whole kingdom because she's going to be an example. It'll cause all women to despise their husbands when they give their wife a command.

[36:03] And we can't have that because it would be sort of like you kids when you come home and you say, Mom, can I please do this? No. Yeah, but Susie's mom lets her do it.

And that's what these ladies, they think in the kingdom will say. Honey, I want you to do this. No. Well, where'd you get that? Well, Vashti told King Xerxes, no.

And so I can tell you no. And that's what these counselors are concerned about. It's true, there's great power and example. We talked about it this morning. But I think they've blown it a bit out of proportion in saying that it's going to affect all 127 provinces.

And if that happens, it's just going to spread and no husband's going to be respected in his home. There's going to be contempt and anger aplenty to go around. And so his recommendation is let's make an example of this woman.

Let's have a kingly word, a kingly decree from you, Xerxes. Get rid of Vashti for good. Banish her. Gone. Never get... She doesn't want to come see you now, she'll never come see you again.

[37:13] She's out. And let's replace her with a better model. Someone who will listen to you and answer you. And so to answer his question, according to law, according to the decree, what must be done?

Well, there isn't one. Let's make a new one. Let's get rid of the queen. And so they create a new decree. The king and his nobles were pleased with the advice. They're drunk. Okay.

Good. Let's do it. Let's get rid of the queen. I mean, and there's a hint when you get to chapter 2 and verse 1 that Xerxes regrets his decision. Look over there just for a second.

Later, when the anger of King Xerxes had subsided, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what he had decreed about her. And so the king's attendants proposed, let a search be made and so on.

But his anger subsides and he remembers his queen and he remembers what she did and he remembers what he decreed. And there's a hint there that maybe he regrets it.

[38:18] History tells us that Vashti was a beautiful woman and that Xerxes loved her, that he enjoyed her. And so here's this stupid drunk man and he deposes his queen on a whim and probably lives to regret it.

But at the time they were pleased with it. All right. Let's get rid of the queen. And then let's tell everybody else. Let's send word out to all 127 provinces, each one in their own language. When you've conquered that many lands there's still going to be different languages spoken. So let's send it out in their own languages that each one should be ruler, each man should be ruler in his own home. That wasn't actually the decree.

The decree was only about Vashti but they're going to, I guess it's maybe a sub decree or something. Each man should be ruler in his own home and in his own household.

And so it's got implications for all these other homes. And there's some serious problems here with this whole law making system and the law that they came up with. First of all, it's going to be impossible to enforce.

[39:24] You know, Vashti showed that when she said, when she refused to come. The king can give a command but the command can be broken. The decree might be, you can't strike the decree

off the books but you can break the decree.

Every man's ruler in his own house, okay, that's going to be a law in Persia for however long the Persian Empire lives but they can't enforce it. They're still going to be able to disrespect their husbands just like Vashti did to Xerxes.

It's impossible to stop. Vashti's not going to stop people from ignoring, her example isn't going to stop them from ignoring the decrees. And what Xerxes has done and what his wise counselors have come up with is to ensure that everybody in the kingdom finds out what's happened.

He's just guaranteed that everybody knows what a lousy ruler he is. How he couldn't manage his own home. Probably if he had said nothing the people at the banquet would have known so the people in the capital of Susa might have started to leak out a little bit but he's just guaranteed that every person in the kingdom is going to find out that Vashti said no to him.

That Vashti disrespected his authority. And so while trying to make an example of Vashti he's actually making a fool of himself. While trying to show himself great and powerful he's displaying his own weakness for everybody to see.

[40:42] Not really a very smart decree. Not really a very good plan. You see the influence of the alcohol here. And the lack of wisdom. These are not the guys you want running your country.

The law making system in our country is not perfect. It's far from it but it's vastly better than what's going on here. And so be thankful for the country that you live in. Be thankful that a powerful king in our country can't just out of whim make a law and make it a decree and an irrevocable one.

Be glad that there's a system, a process for how laws are made and enforced. Be thankful for the country you live in. Be thankful that these men aren't your rulers. One commentator has very strong words but I think he's right.

Speaking of this situation he says it reveals a society fraught with danger for it is ruled by the pride and pomposity of buffoons whose tender egos can marshal the state's legislative and administrative machinery for the ferverance of selfish and childish causes.

On a whim his egos hurt boom we're going to make a law because of something stupid something foolish. Be thankful that that's not how laws are made in our land.

[41:57] And so there's the counselors and a word now to conclude for the congregation for you all. After having seen the king and the queen and these unwise counselors the congregation and we noted this at the beginning but while wisdom and power are often separated in man what a blessing to know that they find their perfect fulfillment in God.

Which is why it's deeply comforting to know that even if Xerxes or someone like him is on the throne whether in our country or a country that's threatening us a country that has nuclear weapons that's threatening us a country that is harboring terrorists!

That want to kill us! Whenever someone like Xerxes is on the throne our God who is perfectly wise and powerful and not to mention loving and just and holy and eternal and good and so on this God is on the throne of heaven and his power is never divorced from his wisdom and all that he does is right and true there are no gaps in his wisdom so no matter what happens personally in your own life or on a national or world scale we may not understand it it may not make sense to us it might look as messed up as Esther chapter 1 looks as the Persian Empire looked we might not understand it no sense to us but God makes no mistakes God doesn't decree foolish laws on the drunken wind God does all things according to his decree his perfect plan planned it before all of eternity and now he's bringing it to pass that's our salvation that's everything that happens in the world all according to his plan and so we need not fear we need not tremble we need not worry because a wise and powerful

God is on the throne a king who is very different from the one that we read of here in Esther 1 and then for you parents tonight we saw at the beginning if just perhaps somewhere along the line Xerxes had picked up a little wisdom maybe if his dad had taught him if he had paid attention to the examples of kings that had gone before him if he had just learned a little bit of wisdom maybe he could have avoided some of this mess you parents make sure you impart that wisdom and warnings an example to your children don't doom them to a life of sin and futility by failing to show them your own mistakes even and the path that would avoid such mistakes you can be honest with your children and say they've done some stupid things and I don't want you to make the same mistakes here's how you can avoid them here's the way of wisdom walk in it don't be so proud that you can't admit your mistakes to your kids don't be so foolish as to not point them in the way of wisdom don't be so foolish as to say you know what

I'm going to let him let him go his own way and let him learn for himself let him learn the hard way show them the way of wisdom if only someone had pointed Xerxes to wisdom don't let the same thing be said of you as parents give them wise examples that power of example that we heard of this morning live it out before them a life of wisdom show them that it ends in life show them the great benefits don't make your Christianity look like a drudgery to your children there's not much incentive there there's not much benefit there that they see show them that it's a life of joy a life of prosperity even if you've got no money it's a life of prosperity a life of great blessing make sure they see that in you make sure they see the wisdom of it and you young people you children don't ignore the wisdom of your parents the wisdom of the scriptures and so doom yourself to a life of foolish empty vain pursuits you've received much wisdom you're responsible for it please don't think that you need to try it out for yourself and to see for yourself is it really that bad is it really going to land me in a world of trouble it looks so good let me just try you don't have to do that so many people have gone before you and tried it and their examples are littered all across history and the pages of scripture are full of them and you can even maybe look at your own parents who aren't perfect and see that those foolish choices those dangerous things will land you in the same place trouble every time and eventually that path of folly will land you in death eternal death hell judgment for all of eternity there's no good to be found there read Ecclesiastes learn that every pursuit under the sun whether you're chasing women or wealth or power all of those things are vanity accept this fear God and keep His commandments for this is the whole duty of man somebody's already made all the mistakes read about somebody else's mistakes and then say

[47 : 16] God be merciful to me God keep me from these things God save me because you know what you're not doomed to those things there is a way of salvation and you know why that is because Jesus invites you to a feast not a feast like Xerxes not one where He's showing off His vast wealth and power not one where He's going to put you on display but a feast where the glorious riches of His grace are on display granting you a great eternal inheritance feasting with Him for all of eternity it's a great glory to be invited to Christ's feast we understand probably why Vashti would refuse Xerxes invitation wouldn't want to go there if you were her but I can't understand why you would refuse the invitation of Christ to come to His feast this is a glorious feast nothing but good can come for you if you come to this feast and so don't turn aside don't reject the King's invitation he's very different from King Xerxes he's the exact opposite he's a glorious King that loves you that wants you to come to Him and if you come

He will not cast you out and so you run and trust in Christ today avoid all this mess all this foolishness that will land you in hell and come and walk with us not perfectly come and walk with us in the path of wisdom that leads to life and find that Jesus is a faithful shepherd find that the God in Heaven is a wise God a good God and does all things well and you will find refuge shelter and assure salvation it's in Christ alone and so you come and trust in this Christ let's join our hearts together as we pray our Father we thank you that you are good and powerful and wise that you do all things well we thank you that you don't make commands on a whim but that your commands that you've given us are a reflection of who you are and that you are unchanging and so your decrees are unchanging and we thank you that you do bring all things to pass according to your perfect plan we pray that you would give us grace to humbly submit to it even when we do not understand it we pray that you would give us grace to walk in the path of wisdom that leads to life and to avoid the path of foolishness that ends in death would you guard us would you keep us we pray guard our young people would you draw them to yourself draw any here this night that do not know the Savior they've been invited to come to the banquet to come to the feast draw them in we pray that they would come this night and so find forgiveness of sins assure refuge in time of trouble we thank you that you are not like foolish kings of the earth we thank you that Jesus is not like foolish kings of the earth we pray that you would forgive us for being foolish grant us grace to walk in wisdom even as we go from this place and we go into the world and seek to live our lives in our homes our schools our workplaces our neighborhoods wherever you call us to go we pray that you would give us grace to reflect the light of your glory and so to bring honor and glory to your name in all that we say and do and we ask it in Jesus name
Amen