

# Two Plots

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Preacher: Aaron Hoak

[0:00] We pick up the account in verse 19 of Esther 2, and we'll read on through chapter 3. The Lord tells us, When the virgins were assembled a second time, Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate.

But Esther had kept secret her family background and nationality just as Mordecai had told her to do. For she continued to follow Mordecai's instructions as she had done when he was bringing her up.

During the time Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Big Thanna and Teresh, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway, became angry and conspired to assassinate King Xerxes. But Mordecai found out about the plot and told Queen Esther, who in turn reported it to the king, giving credit to Mordecai. And when the report was investigated and found to be true, the two officials were hanged on a gallows.

All this was recorded in the book of the Annals in the presence of the king. After these events, King Xerxes honored Haman, son of Hamadathah the Agagite, elevating him and giving him a seat of honor higher than that of all the other nobles.

[1:20] All the royal officials at the king's gate knelt down and paid honor to Haman, for the king had commanded this concerning him. But Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor.

Then the royal officials at the king's gate asked Mordecai, Why do you disobey the king's command? Day after day they spoke to him, but he refused to comply.

Therefore they told Haman about it to see whether Mordecai's behavior would be tolerated, for he had told them he was a Jew. When Haman saw that Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor, he was enraged.

Yet having learned who Mordecai's people were, he scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai. Instead, Haman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes.

In the twelfth year of King Xerxes, in the first month, the month of Nisan, they cast the purr, that is the lot, in the presence of Haman to select a day and month, and the lot fell on the twelfth month, the month of Adar.

[2:31] Then Haman said to King Xerxes, There is a certain people dispersed and scattered among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom whose customs are different from those of all other people and who do not obey the king's laws.

It is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them. If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them, and I will put ten thousand talents of silver into the royal treasury for the men who carry out this business.

So the king took his signet ring from his finger and gave it to Haman, son of Hamadathah the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. Keep the money, the king said to Haman, and do with the people as you please.

Then on the thirteenth day of the first month, the royal secretaries were summoned. They wrote out in the script of each province and in the language of each people all Haman's orders to the king's satraps, the governors of the various provinces, and the nobles of the various peoples.

These were written in the name of King Xerxes himself and sealed with his own ring. Dispatches were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with the order to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the Jews, young and old, women and little children, on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods.

[4:01] A copy of the text of the edict was to be issued as law in every province and made known to the people of every nationality so they would be ready for that day.

Spurred on by the king's command, the couriers went out and the edict was issued in the citadel of Susa. The king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Susa was bewildered.

Please turn again with me in your Bibles to Esther in chapter 2. We'll be looking at the end of that chapter and chapter 3 as well tonight. In the short time that we've spent studying the book of Esther, we're not even all the way through two chapters yet, we've seen already some stunning displays of folly.

Some remarkable lack of wisdom on the part of the main characters involved. Especially on the part of King Xerxes and his so-called advisors.

And as we progress, I wish I could tell you that things get better. But at least tonight, in what we're going to see, things don't get better. If anything, it gets worse.

[5:20] We see even less wisdom. And more folly. Tonight we've got two evil plots. One at the end of chapter 2 and one occupies all of chapter 3.

Two evil plots. And that's our very simple outline tonight. Plot 1 and plot 2. And in these evil plots, we've got four fools. Depending on how you count.

There's probably more, but we're going to look at four different fools. And as we saw with Xerxes, these men very much could have used some wisdom. The wisdom of Solomon.

And I want to read for you just a little bit of Solomon's wisdom from Proverbs chapter 1. And you'll see how relevant it is to these fools. This is from Proverbs 1.

My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them. If they say, come along with us, let's lie and wait for someone's blood. Let's waylay some harmless soul.

[6:16] Let's swallow them alive like the grave. And whole like those who go down to the pit. We will get all sorts of valuable things. And fill our houses with plunder. Throw in your lot with us.

And we will share a common purse. My son, do not go along with them. Do not set foot on their paths. For their feet rush into sin. They are swift to shed blood.

How useless to spread a net in full view of all the birds. These men lie in wait for their own blood. They waylay only themselves. Such is the end of all who go after ill-gotten gain.

It takes away the life of those who get it. That's tailor-made for Esther 2-3. These men needed some of that wisdom. And we'll see it as we go along as the story unfolds.

We're picking back up where we've left off. The beautiful Esther has been made queen because she earned, she worked for and earned the favor of the king. He chose her among all the other virgins that have been gathered.

[7:17] And she is now queen in the palace at Susa. And no sooner has she gotten settled in to the palace than things are all now in an uproar again. There are two plots afoot tonight.

Two wicked, evil plots. And we'll consider each of them in turn. And plot number one is an attempt on a king's life. An attempt on a king's life. And it's there at the end of chapter 2.

And verses 19 and 20 give us something of the setting. There was, for some reason, we read, another gathering of virgins. They're assembled a second time.

We don't know if these were the leftovers from the first group or if Xerxes liked the whole thing so much the first time that he had it done again. Don't know. But there's a gathering of virgins again. And another little tidbit of information. Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate. Now when you read Esther, you have to pay attention to the details. Because they always come back and they always figure in later.

[8:15] They're always significant. And here is a very important piece of information. Mordecai is now sitting in the gate of the king. You say, big deal. We know where he's sitting. Well, it's more than just his location.

The gate of a city is where the judicial transactions took place. It's where laws were handed down and where people were judged according to those laws. And to have a seat in the gate of the king is to have a role, a place, an office in the kingdom.

Somewhere down underneath the king. Somewhere in the hierarchy. And Mordecai now has a place in the king's gate. We read of him in chapter 3 and verses 2 and 3.

Similarly, he's among the officials who sit there at the king's gate. Now we don't know if Mordecai has held this position for some time. Or if the new queen has put in a good word for her cousin.

For Mordecai. Hey, I know a guy. He would be a good man to have serving on your staff. We don't know how he came to be here. But here he is. He's at the king's gate. And that fact is going to play a very important role in both of these plots.

[9:20] Plot number one and plot number two. And then we're reminded as well that Esther is still obeying Mordecai's command to her to not make known the circumstances of her birth, her parents, and her people.

That she's a Jew. For better or for worse, she's to keep it secret. And this little tidbit of information that we've already been told, but the narrator reminds us again, that's going to figure very significantly into the second plot as well.

But then comes the plot. Well, Mordecai is sitting there. Two of the king's officers, and they've got some great names. Big Thana. You almost wish there was a little Thana to go with them.

But there's Big Thana and Teresh. And they get mad at the king for some unknown reason. Who knows? Xerxes was known for messing around with the wives of his officers.

Maybe that had happened. We don't know. But they're upset at the king. And they want to kill him. So they make plans to stretch out their hands against the king. To lay their hands on him. To take his life.

[10:22] To assassinate him. And as the doorkeepers, those who guard the access to the palace, they would have access. And therefore, opportunity to carry out their plot.

Well, the plot doesn't get far because it's discovered and reported. Mordecai is conveniently located in the king's gate. Near where these two men worked.

And he got wind of the plot. And Mordecai could have kept that information to himself. But he does, I believe, the right thing. And reports the plot to Esther who relays it to the king in Mordecai's name. So that Mordecai will get credit for it. And Mordecai is doing what the exiles had been instructed to do. His family was among the first ones carried into exile. And Jeremiah wrote a letter to those first families carried into exile.

And he said in Jeremiah 29 in verse 7 in that letter, Also seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it.

[11:21] Because if it prospers, you too will prosper. And Mordecai is following the directions he received from the Lord through the prophet Jeremiah. He's seeking the peace and prosperity of this pagan city where he dwells.

A mutiny in Persia is only going to lead to instability. Right now, things are good for the Jews in Persia. They're not facing persecution. In fact, there's a queen that's a Jew.

And he, a Jew, has a position as one of the king's officials. And he doesn't, rightly, doesn't want to upset the boat. He's seeking the peace and the prosperity of the city in which he lives.

As he's been instructed. And so he wants to see that continue. And we can pause here and ask, Do you do the same? Do you seek the peace and prosperity of the community, the nation, and narrow it down even, the place of employment, the school, the neighborhood, the home, the church where God has placed you?

God puts us in particular places, in particular situations, in particular settings, to bring honor and glory to His name. And one of the ways we do that is seeking the good of God's people.

[12:34] And how is it that you seek the good of God's people? You seek the good of the place where they live. If you're in exile in Persia, good. If you live in Bremen, Indiana, then you seek the peace and prosperity of your little town.

We're not to isolate ourselves from the society, but rather to seek the good of it, so that good will come for God's people as well. Now, you might not have information about an attempt that's going to be made on the life of the president.

Or Bremen doesn't even have a mayor. The town council of Bremen. But you can certainly follow Jeremiah's other instruction, pray to the Lord for the place in which you live, that it may prosper, and so you too may prosper.

You can seek to have an influence for good by being salt and light. And if you do get wind of a plot to embarrass a teacher or a boss, you can let the appropriate people know. Those things that are lawful and which will promote peace and prosperity for the society and thus for God's people we ought to do.

Just as Mordecai does here in the city of Susa. Well, having gotten a report of the plot from Esther, the king has it investigated, and they find out it's true.

[13:52] And Bigthana and Teresh find out that men who lie in wait for their own blood, or they lie in wait for their own blood, they waylay only themselves. And such is the end of all who go after ill-gotten gain.

It takes away the lives of those who get it. They're after someone else's blood. They're after the king's blood, but whose blood is shed? The two plotters. The two schemers.

Just a little dose of Solomon's wisdom could have prevented this whole sad story. And so they're plotting ends in their own life coming to an end.

They're executed, Persian style. Perhaps by hanging. Perhaps by being impaled on poles. Or perhaps the imagery of hanging here is displaying their dead bodies, however they were executed, by hanging them on a tree for all to see.

Not clear. It could be any one of those things, but the fact of their execution is clear. They're dead. Their lives are taken for their insubordination, for their treason against their country and their king.

[14:54] And then, just another note, something to file away. This information is recorded in the Chronicles of the King. What happened was written down, and Mordecai's name was written down with it.

Esther is like a movie, almost, or a book, where you have to catch every detail. Because if you don't, something's going to come around later, and you're going to go, that doesn't make any sense, unless you caught this little piece of information.

Well, here's another one of those little things that's important. Mordecai's good deed is recorded in the book of the Chronicles of the King of Persia. And it's done in the presence of the king.

Now, we might expect to find some sort of promotion for Mordecai. He's done a great thing for the king. Let's advance him. Let's give him some money. Let's give him a monetary reward.

Let's reward the man for saving the king's life. But there's nothing of the sort. It seems that our inept king has once again dropped the ball. It's a good thing it was written down. And Ian Duguid says this, Timing is everything in the work of providence.

[15:58] And even though his hand is still invisible, God is nonetheless at work accomplishing his own ends. You just hold on, Mordecai.

You'll get your due in God's good time. God's working all these things together for good for his people. And the lesson here is not to make sure that every good deed you do is written down.

So that at some point, somebody can read about it and tell you what a wonderful person you are and reward you for it. That's not the point at all. Not the lesson to be learned. The lesson is that there is a good reason when your good deeds go unnoticed and unrewarded.

You might think it's unfair. It's unkind. I did this great thing and nobody has said anything to me about it. They didn't even notice it. They didn't even see it. Nobody knows. I'm not getting any credit.

We go and we mope and we pout because we want some praise. Now, we don't see Mordecai doing that here, but that tends to be our response when we're not rewarded for something good that we've done.

[16:55] But the reality is that God didn't want your good deed to be noticed or rewarded at that time. Maybe it would have puffed you up with pride. Who knows what might have come? But instead, as Duguid points out, God is working to accomplish His perfect plan, not yours.

And so you shouldn't be seeking the good of those around you for your own glory. That's poor motivation. I'm going to do a good deed so somebody will see me and notice and praise me for it. No. We do it before the eye of our Heavenly Father. He sees and rewards in secret. If you're aiming for your own glory, your deeds of service and mercy begin to look more like deeds of self-service and pride.

And so there is no reward for Mordecai. And so the first plot comes to an end. It's rather uneventful because it's not actually carried out.

It's caught in time and it's thwarted. But then, on the heels of plot number one comes plot number two. The first was an attempt on one man's life, a king's life.

[18:00] The second is an attempt on a whole nation's life. And to set up the plot, we're introduced to a new character. This is the fourth main character in the book of Esther.

We've got Xerxes, Esther, Mordecai, and now we meet the evil, the wicked Haman, the villain of the story.

And we have to learn something about him. After these events, King Xerxes honored, and we expect to see Mordecai's name there. Honored Mordecai. Elevating him because he's done this good deed. We don't know why Haman was elevated.

We don't know what he did to earn it. We don't know what his characteristics were that made him a good leader, that deserved. He's raised to the position of really number two in the country behind only the king. But for whatever reason that we don't know, this is a huge promotion and a position of honor.

But what we are told is of great significance. Sometimes we breeze over this genealogical information as though it's not important. But if we do that here, we miss something vital to the story. [19:04] Haman is an Agagite or an Agagite. Anybody remember who Agag was? King of the Amalekites.

That's right. The sworn enemy of Israel. There's history between Haman's people and Mordecai's people. The Amalekites were the perennial enemy of Israel.

It was this people that attacked the Israelites somewhere between the Red Sea and Mount Sinai. And it was the battle that the Israelites won because Aaron and Hur went and held up Moses' arms. And when Moses' arms were up, the Israelites prevailed. And when they were down, the Amalekites prevailed. And so they hold his arms up to the end of the day and the Israelites prevail and they win the battle. That's the enemy we're talking about.

And after this battle, it said in Exodus 17, the Lord will be at war against the Amalekites from generation to generation. And later, before they enter the Promised Land, God reminds them in Deuteronomy 25, He says, when the Lord your God gives you rest from all the enemies around you in the land, He has given you to possess as an inheritance, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.

[20:15] Do not forget. So here they are. They're going into the Promised Land and God says, here in this land there are many people. Once you're done defeating all of them, don't forget Amalek.

You go back and you what them off the face of the earth. And you remember the king that was tasked with doing that? King Saul. That's right. And did he do what God said?

Utterly destroy the Amalekites? He failed, didn't he? He failed in his task. He saved some of the sheep, some of the animals. He spared King Agag.

Agag. And evidently, he spared others as well. And it ends up that Samuel chops Agag to pieces before the Lord because Saul didn't kill him. Now you bring all of that history with you into this time during the exile.

You remember the information now about Mordecai. Look back at chapter 2 and verse 5. Now, there was in the citadel of Susa a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin named Mordecai, son of Jer, the son of Shemai, the son of Kish.

[21:21] What tribe was Mordecai from? The tribe of Benjamin. Same tribe that King Saul was from. Who is Mordecai's father? It's Kish.

Who is Saul's father? Kish. Two different men. Same name. But those facts are given to us to make us remember the conflict between King Saul and now Haman, the Agagite.

There's history between these two men. Okay? So there's a lot of history to remember there. Now we're ready to proceed with the story here in Esther chapter 3. With Haman's new position elevated to a position of royalty and authority, there's a few perks with that.

And one of those is that all the royal officials sitting at the gate of the king would kneel down to honor Haman. A sign of respect for someone that was in a position of authority over them.

And it would be expected that Mordecai, who was an official at the king's gate, would kneel down with the rest of them. But Mordecai refuses. He doesn't do it. Again, we see that little information about Mordecai being at the king's gate being very important.

[22:34] Here he is and he's not kneeling down as he's been commanded to do. Now many think that Mordecai is noble here and he's doing this for conscience sake. Sort of like Daniel's three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

We won't bow down and worship your idol. And they get thrown in the fiery furnace because they only worship one God alone. I don't think that Mordecai is quite so noble as Daniel's three friends here.

He's not being asked to worship Haman. He's being asked to show him respect. In other places in the history of Israel, we see that it's appropriate to kneel to someone as a sign of respect and authority without taking anything away from the worship of God.

And I can give you some references where David himself knelt at the feet of Saul the king as a show of respect, a show of honor, something that was legitimate to do. I don't think Mordecai would have been breaking any of God's laws to kneel down at the feet of Haman when he walked by. And it hasn't been Mordecai's pattern to this point to make a firm stand like that anyway. He's hidden his identity up to this point.

[23:41] He's hidden Esther's identity. He didn't tell Esther to not go in for her night with the queen. And so, if Mordecai up to this point had been this paragon of virtue and firmness and so on, we might be more inclined to think that he's not kneeling down for all the right reasons.

But, I don't think that's the case with him. Especially since it was legitimate to kneel to show honor to another human. And when he's asked, why don't you keep the king's command?

Why do you disobey the king's command? Day after day, he refuses to comply. And when the people who are asking the question go to tell Haman, look there in verse 4, therefore, they told Haman about it to see whether Mordecai's behavior or I think maybe better Mordecai's explanation would be tolerated for he had told them he was a Jew.

Why don't you bow down? Because I'm a Jew. His explanation wasn't because I can't worship a man, because I can only worship the true God. He says, it's because I'm a Jew.

And now, remember all that history between the Jews and the Amalekites. And, there's probably good reason for Mordecai not to bow down because God did say, don't forget the Amalekites.

[25:01] Utterly wipe them off the face of the earth. These people weren't to be honored. These people were despicable. They were the Lord's enemies from generation to generation. They didn't deserve honor. And so, there was probably a good reason for Mordecai not to bow down, but not such a good reason as we might think when we first read this story.

Mordecai didn't tolerate insubordination from the two plotters in chapter 2, but now he's the one who's insubordinate. He's the one who's disobeying the king's command. He's planting his flag. He's taking his stand. And we wish, at least as we read the passage, that he had planted his flag somewhere else. Because then we might be a little bit more understanding of this stand that he takes.

What can we learn from this stand that Mordecai takes? Probably the right thing, but it seems like there's some poor motivation here. Maybe a little bit of pride. Maybe a chip on his shoulder because he was passed over for the promotion.

I'm a Jew and he's an Amalekite. His motivation is at least questionable here. What can we learn from that? Well, we must always be careful to stand for the truth.

[26:12] To stand for our Lord. To not give any ground. But we must be careful to make sure we're standing in the right place for the right reason.

That we're fighting the right battle. That we plant our flag on the right hill and refuse to give any ground. If you're going to take a stand, make sure it is for the truth. Make sure it's not for some personal conviction that doesn't find any backing in God's Word.

Make sure that it is something that God has commanded and not a blind zeal that goes beyond the Word of God. I'll give you an example. When a judge refuses a court order to remove a public display of the Ten Commandments, he's not obeying God.

God never tells us anywhere to publicly display the Ten Commandments. In fact, he's disobeying God who says to be subject to the authorities that He, that God has placed in that position of authority.

He's planting His flag on the wrong hill. Because God doesn't command such a thing. We are to obey God rather than men when the commandments conflict. But only when they conflict.

[27:25] And if they don't, we're to obey the authorities that God has placed over us. If you're going to make the right stand, then also make sure it's with the right motive. I can sadly remember examples from my own life where I was in high school when I was young and I was proud and full of myself.

And I'm not saying I'm not those things now. We struggle with those things for our whole lives. But I would take stands in high school that were the right stand to take. Discussions in our classroom on homosexuality and evolution.

And I can remember discussions about those things. And I would plant my flag firmly on the truth of the Bible, but it wasn't for the best of reasons. And it wasn't with the best of attitudes. Yes, I loved the truth.

I wanted others to know it. But I was proud and stubborn. And I enjoyed a good argument. And those aren't things that endear us to our enemies. And those aren't things that endear the truth to our enemies.

It turns them off to the truth. It makes them shy away when we approach it with that proud, stubborn, arrogant sort of attitude. May God give us wisdom to choose the right battles and the strength to fight them with humility and boldness and grace for the right reasons.

[28:39] Well, Mordecai's explanation, why don't you bow down? I'm a Jew. And that doesn't placate Haman. That doesn't satisfy him.

Oh, that makes him mad. He's a Jew. He's filled with anger. Anger that's about to boil over. And so the plot now is formed. Just as the gatekeepers wanted to lay hands on the king, now Haman wants to lay hands not just on Mordecai, but on all the Jews.

Every single one of them. He remembers the feud between Amalek and Israel. He knows the history as well as Mordecai does.

Make no mistake, he's got a personal vendetta against Mordecai as well. He can't stand it. Now that it's been brought to his attention, somebody pointed it out to him and now he's noticed. Every time he walks in, there's Mordecai standing there.

And you know that just grates against what we find as an extremely proud, arrogant man.

Somebody's not bowing down and giving him the honor that he deserves. And that just grates against him.

[29:42] And so, he wants to kill Mordecai, but here's an opportunity to do something much more. Let's wipe out the Jews altogether. Let's put them down once and for all.

And so, he casts the poor. The Persian word for lots. Haman's going to leave it to fate to determine the exact occasion of the attack when he'll carry out this evil deed of destroying this people.

And what a blessing that the lot is cast into the lap, but it's every decision is from the Lord. Haman thought he was leaving it to chance. Oh, we'll attack whatever day we get.

We'll go month by month until we get the month, and then we'll cast lots day by day until we get the day. And they get the month and the day. And it'll be the 12th month and the 13th day of that month.

You know what? That's 11 months away yet. They're in the first month of the year. And so the Jews have 11 months to plan their defense. 11 months for the rest of the story of Esther to unfold.

[30:44] God planned the day of the attack against the Jews so that there would be time to prepare. What if Haman had cast the lot and had come up the next day? No time for the Jews to respond.

But the lot was in God's hands. And He gives His people time to prepare, time to defend themselves, time to beseech the king, as we'll see later in the book of Esther.

What a capricious man this is. With a roll of the dice, He decides the fate of a people and of God's people. And so there's just one thing left to do.

He's just got to get it past the king. He's got to sell it, and then he'll be home free. Just needs the king's stamp of approval on his plan. And so he's going to go present it to the king.

And boy, if there was ever some misrepresenting, some flat out lies and falsehood, it's right here with Haman. He's going to come in and make this look like a case that the king can't turn down.

[31:47] So he comes and he says, there's this one people. Among all the peoples in your kingdom, O king, there's this one people. And they're scattered throughout, but they're not really assimilated.

There are people unto themselves in the midst of this people. And that makes them dangerous. They've got their own laws. Their own decrees that they follow. And they're different from your laws and your decrees. O king.

And they're not obeying your laws and your decrees. O king. And so, they're dangerous. And king, it would be in your best interest to not let them go unnoticed.

It would be in your best interest to start paying some attention to them. Don't just leave them be and think that nothing will come of a king. These are a dangerous people.

This case makes it seem as though the Jews were some great threat to the kingdom of Persia. It makes it seem as though he's got the king's best interest at heart. But Haman, Haman is a selfish, wicked man.

[32:47] He doesn't do anything for anybody else. He does things for himself. But the king doesn't see through that. It's Haman's own interests that consume him.

And what irony there is here. Haman wants to get rid of Mordecai under the guise of the king's best interest. When Mordecai is the one who truly has the king's best interest at heart.

And he's proved it. He saved the king's life once already. Mordecai is a man that does want what's best for the king. Haman's pretending to want what's best for the king, but really he doesn't.

He wants what's best for himself. Now when we act, when we do things, we must make sure that we're acting in accordance with Philippians 2.3. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

Haman has only his own interests at heart. What about you? Are you good at making it seem like you're concerned about other people when really your only concern is yourself?

[33:49] We've talked about this a bit already. It's that doing good and showing mercy and kindness to others so other people will think better of you. Serving your own ends.

Your own purposes. Preachers can be guilty of this. It's a great danger. We preach for your benefit, but often I can be quite pleased with myself in doing it so that I receive praise if I don't guard my heart and my mind against such wicked motives and self-serving motives.

That's the sort of thing that can destroy a church when people are only looking out for themselves. Passing it off is trying to look out for everybody else like Haman. But really their concern is selfish and proud instead of humble and selfless.

May God keep us from such. May He keep us from being like Haman. And this Haman, so desperate and proud and violent and grudge-holding, you see, that he even offers an obscene amount of money to the king.

I'll give you I'll give you 10,000 talents of silver. This massive amount of silver. We'll put it in your treasury. A little bribe, a big bribe to the king to make sure things go off smoothly.

[35:02] And he anticipates, no doubt, that plundering the Jews will more than replenish any money that he pays out to the king. And so, the plot is laid.

It's presented to the king. And only if Haman had had, again, the wisdom of Solomon to know that he's lying in wait for his own blood. As we'll see as the story unfolds, that any ill-gotten gain will take away his own life.

And we see that so clearly in the chapters to come. But what's really troubling after Haman makes his case is the king's apathy and the law that he then decrees.

We might have hoped for better from the king. We don't expect it. We've seen him already in action and it's not pretty. But we might have hoped for better. Just ask some questions, king. Who exactly are these people?

Which people group in my kingdom? What laws do they have that are different from our laws? What laws are they breaking? Why the sudden threat? Why all of a sudden this need to destroy this people who's been living among us for the 12th year now of King Xerxes' reign?

[36:09] What's the sudden threat? Why is it all of a sudden in my best interest to wipe this people off the face of the earth? Wouldn't you be curious if Haman came waltzing into your throne room and wanted to wipe a whole people off the face of the earth?

Wouldn't you ask a few questions? Just want to know a little bit? Just a little bit of work would have turned up Mordecai and Esther and discovered that these people have actually worked for the peace and prosperity of the kingdom.

They've been good for the kingdom of Persia. And not bad. But there's none of this. And we know again from Proverbs, the first to present his case seems right until another comes forward and questions him.

But if nobody questions him, his case is going to seem right. The king needs to open his mouth and ask some questions. Or at least bring in some other witnesses. Is it your experience with these people that they're such a threat and a danger?

And against my best interest to keep them in the kingdom. But there's no such thing. And he who answers before listening, that is his folly and shame. What is it then when he answers without listening at all it seems?

[37:16] We heard this morning about mental laziness being one of the most common forms of laziness. Here's one of the most mentally lazy people in all the scriptures, I think. This King Xerxes. Doesn't want to put the time into it.

Okay, you want to kill him? Here's the ring. And we've seen that already. He doesn't think for himself. What should we do now? What does the law say about this? Oh, you think we should decree that we're going to get rid of the queen? Okay, let's do that.

Oh, you think we should decree that we're going to bring in all the virgins? Okay, I don't want to think about it. That sounds good. We'll do it. He doesn't think. He doesn't think for himself. He's lazy.

And so without a thought, he gives the signet, the royal seal that demonstrates the validity of any written decree. It comes from the king. He gives it to the enemy of the Jews. What a title.

The enemy of the Jews. It's appropriate for Haman, the Agagite. And he said, do what you want with the people and keep the money. And when he said keep the money, we understand, according to the custom of the time, that was probably a backhanded way of saying, go ahead and put it in the treasury.

[38 : 20] I'll take it. The opposite, whatever he says, means the opposite. He probably took the money, is most likely. But do what you want with the people. And our assessment from chapter 1 and chapter 2 that the man thinks little for himself is confirmed here.

How lazy. What apathy. And we can only guess what would have happened if Esther had not been so shy about revealing her nationality.

What if Mordecai hadn't commanded her to keep her identity a secret? What if Esther had been bold and revealed who she was, a Jew to the king?

Surely the king wouldn't have been so disposed to Haman's request. Are you crazy? Haman? My wife is a Jew. What are you talking about killing all of them? Mordecai, one of my officials, the guy who saved my life, he's a Jew.

But Mordecai and Esther have been hush-hush about it until Mordecai had to tell these people why he wouldn't bow down. And we wonder what might have been.

[39 : 29] I have a question then for us tonight. Are we so apathetic? Are we so lazy as to not be able to think for ourselves?

Especially even here in this matter of making laws in the land. Again, Ian Dugood, one of the commentators, pointed out something I never thought of before. He says, in a democratic political system, we the people are the ones who possess the signet ring.

When we vote, we assign that power to others to exercise for us. How often do we take seriously our responsibility to examine carefully the arguments presented to us by the different political parties, or we might say the different politicians?

We may be guilty of being easily deceived by flimsy logic because we are too lazy to engage in serious thought. It's an interesting application.

We have the signet ring. And when we vote, we give that power of making laws to our representatives. Do you ever think seriously about who you vote for? And what their stands are?

[40 : 35] And what they believe? And the things that they're going to vote for when they're making laws when they're off in Washington or down at the State House in Indianapolis. Do you give thought to that?

Or are you lazy? And say, I'll vote for this one. He's from the right party, I think. Put my stamp there and hope for the best. And when we don't think about who we're putting into office to make our laws, when we don't inform them of our views on things, we're being just as lazy and just as apathetic as Xerxes, as the king.

Do you ever take your responsibility in this area seriously? Do you ever let those that you have elected to office know what you think on a matter? We are the ones who have put these people into office.

And so, we have made the laws in the land. Do we know what we're doing? Have we given thought to it? And then, are we so apathetic and lazy in the rest of our lives? Do we think through the implications and possible outcomes of our actions, our words, our deeds?

Or do we listen to the persuasive lies of the devil and let ourselves be deceived like Xerxes was deceived by Haman? Oh, Satan says it looks good. Looks good to me. Okay, I'm not going to give it too much thought.

[41 : 56] I'm just going to go with it. Oh, think. When a course of action is presented to you, don't just snap and make a decision. Cast the law and see what you think is best. Think about it.

Use your mind. God has given you a mind. You've heard the importance this morning of thinking and thinking rightly. Well, we see it again here tonight and we see what happens when you don't think rightly.

All of God's people are endangered because a man was too lazy to think and to ask a question.

Again, Duguid says, many have sold their integrity for far less than Ahasuerus.

That's Xerxes' 10,000 talents. We value our honesty less than a few dollars. We value our morality less than satisfying our appetites.

Many times, our stomach is our God and we listen to it without thinking of what might happen if we follow that course of action. May God keep us from Xerxes-like behavior and laziness and apathy and make us to be thinking, men and women and boys and girls, thinking about the consequences of what we're about to do.

[43:05] Well, sadly, Xerxes didn't think. He just put a stamp of approval on it and so scribes were called in to write up the new law, the new decree.

And remember, when a decree is made in Persia, it's irrevocable. It's on the books and it stays there and it cannot be changed. That's this sort of decree that's being made. It's written up in the language of all of the different peoples in the land.

It's to be given to all the rulers, the satraps and the governors and the princes in the land to make sure they get it to all their people, everyone. They want everyone to know. And it's written in each one's language.

Huh. It's just a wee touch of irony here because it shows that there's many people in the kingdom who haven't assimilated. Just like the Israelites.

They still have their own language. They still have their own custom. All these people that they're sending the law out to, they're not a danger to the king. Even though they still have their own language, their own ways about them.

[44:07] That was one of Haman's arguments about the Jews. They've got their own customs. They've got their own ways and so they're a threat. Well, here's many people groups in the kingdom that are that way. Well, we're going to write the law in all of their languages.

It'll be sealed with a signet ring. And nobody's going to miss this decree. Just like the one back in chapter 1. It's going to get to every person in the kingdom. And they're sent with this disturbing decree.

An order has been issued for the Jews, young and old, women and children, to be annihilated, killed, destroyed. We're going to spare no verbiage here.

We'll multiply the verbs here. Annihilate, kill, destroy. All of these things to be done to the Jews. And make no mistake, young and old, women and children included, all of them, are to be killed.

It's devastating. Can you imagine such a thing? And they say the month and the day has been set so you can be ready when it comes. And so, the wicked plot is put in motion.

[45:11] Haman conceives that he brings it to the king. The king puts his rubber stamp on it. And now, all the kingdom knows. And here in the city of Susa, the capital, the city is bewildered.

It's in confusion. And rightly so. What in the world? We know these Jews. They seek the good of the society they live in. They're not troublemakers. They haven't caused anybody any trouble.

Why would we kill them? Haman and Xerxes? Let's have a drink. Let's have another feast. Let's drink it up. And Haman's celebrating because he knows what he's accomplished.

And we have to think here that Xerxes is still in the dark. He doesn't know what he's decreed. So, have a drink and then it will be even more in the dark. What?

What could these two men be thinking? How sad that they don't care that they've just decreed the annihilation of a whole people to be wiped out.

[46:10] Let's have a drink. Okay. And so, all is lost for the Jews, right? One commentator says, given the power of Haman's position and the irrevocability of Persian law, the doom of the Jews seems sealed.

Or is it? And the commentator's cryptic question, or is it, anticipates what we know will be a remarkable, miraculous turn of events where things will be flipped on their head demonstrating that now as always, God sits on His throne.

Unfazed by the plotting and planning of wicked men, God sits in the heavens and laughs. And a few other observations from the chapter. Notice the consequences of sin are far-reaching.

Again, Ian Duguid has been very helpful to me in this series, but he reminds us that going all the way back to the time of Saul, if Saul had obeyed God's command to utterly destroy the Amalekites, there would be no Haman.

Haman wouldn't be on the scene. There would be no problem then between Mordecai and Haman, and thus no threat at this time to the entire Jewish people. And not just with Saul, but with us as well, there are always consequences from our sin.

[47:45] And they may be very far-reaching consequences. And there may be consequences to our sin, even our sins that are forgiven. And all of our sins can be forgiven if we are in Christ, but forgiven sins can have consequences.

You think of a person that's lived a profligate lifestyle, and they've acquired a sexually transmitted disease, and in birth they pass it on to their child. Both that person and the child could be saved. And that sinful lifestyle, that all forgiven. But the consequences of it continue on. The consequences of their sin live on and linger.

You understand now that your breaking of God's laws seems so innocent and harmless. Well, what's a little fun? What's a little breaking of God's law here?

What's a little fun while I'm young? No, no big deal. I'll turn to God later. I want you to know that I've heard grown men saved by God's amazing grace later in life weep over the years that they've wasted.

[48:54] The time that they can't get back. That they wasted living in sin. Time that could have been spent living for Christ, advancing the kingdom. That gone. Their sin's consequences still reaching down into their lives even today.

Understand that sin's consequences are far reaching. Your sin I'm thinking of you young people especially. You think, I'm all about myself. I don't care about anybody else.

I'm going to live the way I want. It's no big deal. Your sin affects more people than just yourself. It affects your parents.

It affects your siblings. And it will affect your children after you should God be pleased to give you children. Saul's sin generations later endangers the people of Israel.

Your sin has far, far, far reaching consequences. Don't take it lightly. Don't think it's no big deal. It's just a little thing. And one final note tonight.

[50:03] If we're honest, we know that the Jews here and we ourselves deserve to be annihilated, killed, and destroyed. Not by Haman.

His wrath was unjust. But God has every right to unleash His wrath against us who have unleashed our rebellion against Him.

We heard this morning again that anything short of hell is a mercy. We don't deserve better. We deserve judgment. We have violated all of God's commandments and we've merited only His judgment.

But remarkably, joyfully, for us, God instead killed His own Son. His Son bore the fullness of God's wrath in our place so that God could show mercy to these Jews.

so that He can show mercy to you and to me when we come and rest in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. And so we're a blessed people. We don't deserve it.

[51:13] We deserve judgment. We deserve punishment. We deserve to be destroyed. And so when we don't receive what we deserve, we bow the knee and we bend in humility and gratitude and praise our God who has not given us what we deserve but He's instead given us what His Son earned for us.

A great reward. And you know tonight that if you're still living in rebellion to this God, still continuing on in your sin, not concerned for its effects on yourself or other people, God's wrath hangs over you this very moment and it could be poured out at any moment on you, but it doesn't have to be that way.

You too can run and find refuge in the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and find mercy for sinners if I can find mercy there. You look around, you see people that have found mercy, the foot of the cross, you can find mercy there as well.

And so God, we look at Esther chapter 3 and start to wring our hands in despair, but then we remember that God is on the throne and He does all things well and even as He preserves the people of Israel, He preserves the descent, the line of His own Son so that He can bring His Son into the world so that we can have hope tonight.

So that we don't have to fear judgment and punishment. What a glorious God and Savior we serve. May God give us grace and help to serve Him as we ought. To give Him the honor that is due to His name.

[ 52 : 42 ] And may you who are yet lost in your sins run to this Christ and find mercy in Him this night.