

# Faith Behind Closed Doors

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[0:00] The book of Esther, the fifth chapter. On the third day, Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace in front of the king's hall.

The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall facing the entrance. When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand.

So Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter. Then the king asked, what is it, Queen Esther? What is your request?

Even up to half the kingdom it will be given you. If it pleases the king, replied Esther, let the king, together with Haman, come today to a banquet I have prepared for him.

Bring Haman at once, the king said, so that we may do what Esther asks. So the king and Haman went to the banquet Esther had prepared.

[1:05] As they were drinking wine, the king again asked Esther, now what is your petition? It will be given you. And what is your request?

Even up to half the kingdom it will be granted. Esther replied, my petition and my request is this. If the king regards me with favor and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet.

I will prepare for them. Then I will answer the king's question. Haman went out that day happy and in high spirits.

But when he saw Mordecai at the king's gate and observed that he neither rose nor showed fear in his presence, he was filled with rage against Mordecai.

Nevertheless, Haman restrained himself and went home. Calling together his friends and Zeresh, his wife, Haman boasted to them about his vast wealth, his many sons, and all the ways the king had honored him and how he had elevated him over the other nobles and officials.

[2:23] And that's not all, Haman added. I'm the only person Queen Esther invited to accompany the king to the banquet she gave. And she's invited me along with the king tomorrow.

But all this gives me no satisfaction as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the king's gate. His wife, Zeresh, and all his friends said to him, have a gallows built 75 feet high and ask the king in the morning to have Mordecai hanged on it.

Then go with the king to the dinner and be happy. This suggestion delighted Haman and he had the gallows built. We come tonight to Esther chapter 5.

Esther, the 5th chapter. Do you like a good suspense story? One that leaves you hanging on the edge of your seat?

Most people do. I enjoy a story like that. Fans of book series that stretch on and on prove it. Just this week, the final book in a series of very popular books came out.

[3:40] And people lined up and waited for hours and hours on end to get it, to find out what finally happens at the end of the story. Because we love a good suspense story. And if somebody leaves us hanging, then we have to find out what happened.

Fans of television shows that stretch on over weeks instead of neatly wrapping up in the space of an hour's time demonstrate the same thing. That we love a good story that leaves us hanging a little bit.

Wondering what's going to happen the next time. And Esther is a little bit like that. You say, well you can sit down and read Esther in a short period of time and find out everything that happens.

Well that's true, but take Esther just a chapter at a time. A section at a time. And the author leaves you hanging. He cuts from scene to scene skillfully. And you're right there and you're ready to find out what happens.

And then he cuts away to another scene. Before he comes back to let you know what happens. Leaves you hanging just a little bit on the edge of your seat. If you take it just a chapter or a section at a time.

[4:43] And at the end of chapter 4 we were left hanging. The people of Israel are about to be destroyed. It's coming. And Esther has been challenged by Mordecai to go to the king and to plead with the king for the lives of the Jews.

For the lives of her very own people. She says, but yeah, if I do that I might get killed. If I go into the king unsummoned. If I go into his presence and he hasn't called for me. Then by decree I die. With just the one exception if the king extends that golden scepter to me. And so Esther said, let's do it. If I perish I perish.

But you go and call a fast for three days. For all of the Jews living in Susa. Call a fast for all of these people. So that I might be prepared to go in to see the king.

And so we were left. There's going to be a fast. What's going to happen to Esther? Will she survive her encounter with the king? What will be her outcome? And chapter 5 splits down two storylines.

[5:46] It begins with Esther and her appearance before the king. And we'll begin with that tonight. Esther's approach to the king. But then it leaves off. Just when we want to find out. It resolves some tension for us.

But then it leaves us with more. And right as we want to find out. He breaks off. And he starts to follow Haman's story again. We pick back up with the wicked Haman. And so we'll talk about Esther tonight for a bit.

And then about Haman tonight. For a bit. And we'll be left hanging again tonight. And so if you want to find out. Well you can read it. But come back next week. And learn more. Of how God is working. Though His hand is never seen. Or though His name is never seen in the book. So we begin with Esther tonight. And her appearance before the king. The third day marks the end of the fast. It's now time for her to get ready. If I perish, I perish. She's ready to go. There's been fasting and mourning during those three days. Hopefully they've been praying. Though it's sadly not mentioned here.

[6:43] Perhaps some of God's faithful people still in Susa were praying. Maybe even Esther and Mordecai were praying. We'd like to hope so. We'd like to think so. But from what we read here in Esther 5.

At least the queen had used the time to do some careful thinking and planning. She knew what she was going to do when she went in to see the king. Maybe she had sought the Lord's face for wisdom.

But she's not just going in on a whim. It's very carefully thought out. And you can see it in her request that she makes of the king as she goes.

She's thought carefully about what she's going to do. And we'll see it was a wise plan. A good plan. We'll see the Lord's hand in it. But all of the planning in the world would be to no avail if the king didn't extend that golden scepter.

If she walked in and he didn't extend that scepter, it didn't matter what she had planned. She'd be killed. And the last hope for the Jews perished. Good thing that the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord.

[7:47] He directs it wherever he wishes. Just like a stream. And so King Xerxes' hand is in the heart of the Lord. This God who is never mentioned but so clearly at work throughout this story as he is in our lives.

His work unseen or unrecognized by the world around us. And sadly, often unrecognized and unremembered by us. We think how clever we are to have come up with this grand idea.

And to have executed it. And things have gone so well. We give ourselves a little pat on the back and we forget that it's the Lord that's at work. And that it's not really about us and our honor and glory.

But there he is nonetheless working all things after the counsel of his will. And so Esther puts off her clothing for fasting. And she puts on her royal robes. She can't hurt, she supposes, perhaps to remind the king that she is the queen.

She is his wife. He did choose her. And last time he did something rash with his previous queen. Things didn't work out so well. He regretted having sent Vashti away.

[8:53] So just a reminder that she is the queen. She's his wife. The royal robes. And she prepares herself so that she'll look attractive. Vashti's great crime and downfall was not coming when she was summoned.

Would Esther's great downfall be coming when she wasn't summoned? And so with fear and trembling, no doubt. She goes into the presence of the king. There's not only the law that says she dies for coming into the presence of the king unsummoned to be afraid of. There's also the fact that in some ways she's on a fool's errand. She's asking for an irrevocable law to be revoked. Well, that's not going to go over very well. She's asking for a king to go back on his law. And so to make something of a fool of himself. And make himself look silly before his people. I decree the destruction of the Jews. Now I'm going to change my mind.

And we're not going to destroy the Jews. It's going to look silly. If he fulfills her request. She's asking that he give back a big old chunk of change that had come into the treasury. Ten thousand talents of silver Haman had paid in there.

[9:59] That's gone if he goes back on his decree to kill the Jews. And she's going to be revealing to him something that she's hidden for all these years of marriage. Perhaps five or so years now.

The fact that she was a Jew. She had deceived her husband for these years. Not exactly reasons to think this encounter is going to go particularly well if you're Esther.

So you can bet there was some fear and trembling as she walked into the entrance of that throne room. Where the king could see her. And he does see her.

And we see his response. She won his favor. It's not just that he was pleased with her. She won his favor. It's active. Just by her appearing there. And her royal beauty. And her bravery.

He recognized. Her bravery in coming unsummoned. Knowing that it could have cost her her life. She comes anyway. And she wins his favor. And he extends the golden scepter. We breathe a sigh of relief.

[10:56] We've made it past the first great danger. Her immediate life, at least for the time being, is spared. Because he's extended his scepter. And she touches the head of it, the end of it.

And is accepted into his presence. Remember, all the Jews outside in Susa still don't know what's happening. They don't know what's going on in the throne. They don't know if Esther's going to live or die yet. And we get the inside track.

We see here that she's been received into his presence. And before we go on to consider the rest of the story here tonight. You see the contrast between how Esther had to approach King Xerxes. And how we can approach our great God and King. Because of what Christ has done. Esther came in fear and trembling. Not knowing if she would live or die. But how blessed we are that when we come to our God through Christ our Lord.

It doesn't have to be with fear and trembling. But rather with confidence. It's what the author of Hebrews tells us. Hebrews 4.16 Let us then, because of our great high priest. Because of Jesus.

[12:02] Because of his perfect worth. Let us then, because of that. Approach the throne of grace with confidence. So that we may receive mercy. And find grace to help us in our time of need.

In Esther's time of need, she needed to go to the king. But she had no confidence to go. Didn't know what would happen. Is the king going to be in a good mood or a bad mood today? Is the hammer going to drop and I'm going to die?

Or is he going to extend the golden scepter and I'm going to live? She doesn't know. But that's not so with the people of God. Because we come through the merits of Christ. And the judgment has already fallen upon Christ.

He has borne that judgment. So that we can receive that golden scepter of welcome. Whenever we come into his presence. Not with fear and trembling. But with great confidence. In our time of need. We come knowing that we have an audience with our Lord. Through Christ our Savior. We come knowing that we have an invitation. We don't have to wait for an invitation.

[12:57] To come into the presence of the king. We have one. Come. Come. He tells us. The cost of access to his presence has been paid by his glorious son.

Blessed people we are. That God isn't like Xerxes. And we come each time wondering. Will we live? Will we survive this encounter? What are you doing with that great privilege?

That great blessing that is yours. If you're in Christ. The privilege of coming into the presence of God. Do you know that privilege? Do you know what it is to be covered in the blood of Christ? To

come not in your best efforts.

In your best looking clothes for that day. But coming clothed in the righteousness of Christ. Coming clothed in His perfect obedience. Having put it on by faith.

Coming into God's presence. No. Have you done that? Have you trusted in Christ? So that you can come into the presence of God without fear. If you haven't, you can come and trust in the Savior tonight.

[13:55] So find freedom from your sin and guilt. Salvation from your sin. Forgiveness. And you can have constant access then to the power and strength of this great God.

We've been hearing of on Sunday mornings. This powerful Creator God. The One who made the universe. If He can do that with the word of His mouth. Imagine what He can do in your life. When you come in your time of need.

You can find mercy and grace to help. Are you trusting Jesus? Are you taking advantage of that free access to God? Do you come into His presence to worship? Every opportunity that you have. Do you find yourself often on your knees? Before the gracious throne of our God. You have free access. You can come before Him whenever you want. You don't have to wait to be summoned. You can come right now. Right now where you're sitting. You can come to Him. And He will hear you. And He will answer you for Jesus' sake. How different than this encounter between Esther and Xerxes.

[14:55] Is our relationship with our God. Are you taking full advantage of it? You've got access to the most powerful being. You've got access to the great God of the universe. You can come into His presence.

And seek His face. And He will receive you. You have an audience with God. Do you take full advantage of it? Come before Him. Don't try to go through this life in your own strength.

You'll fail. It's your great privilege to come before your God through Christ. And so do it. Praise God that He's not like King Xerxes. But now that Esther's been received into His presence.

What's going to happen? He wants to know. What's up, Esther? What's your request? Up to half the kingdom. I'll give it to you. He's in a good mood this day. He knows it was a risk for her to even come into His presence.

And so He says, He knows there's something. She's not just dropping by to say, Hi, honey. He's not going to risk her life for that. And so He knows that there's something more there.

[15:58] And so He says, What's your request? What's your petition? I'll grant it to you. I'll give it to you. And we think, Come on, Esther. He's just offered you up to half the kingdom. The Jews are just a tiny part of it.

So make the request. But Esther's planned her course of action. And even perhaps this unexpected welcome, this gracious offer, doesn't deter her from her plan.

And God has bigger plans. And we'll see it unfold. But she says, She defers. She appeals to His sense of propriety and what's right. To His authority.

To His wisdom. If it seems good to the King. You see how she puts it back on Him. And make sure that he feels like he's in control. If it seems good to the King.

Come to a feast I've prepared. And bring Haman with you. She knows how things work in the Kingdom. How important feasting is. And the banqueting is. We've seen it throughout Esther.

[16:53] And she knows the King might be more favorably disposed too. When his belly is full. When he's happy. He's content. And the King agrees immediately. Quick! Get Haman so we can do according to the Queen's word.

It's funny. There's twice in this chapter. You remember earlier the King's decree. That every man would be ruler in his home. That every man's word would be law in his own home.

And now here. He's doing according to the Queen's word. And we'll see the same thing with Haman. And how fickle these decrees are. But anyway. They go to the feast.

And once they've eaten their fill. They've come to the wine course of the feast. Usually followed all of the rich food. Then comes the course with the wine. They bring out the wine. And they begin to drink freely.

Literally it says. The feast of wine. And so they're drinking. But the King hasn't forgotten. And he brings up the matter again. What's your petition? What's your request? I'll grant your petition.

[17:49] I'll fulfill your request. Path the kingdom. Whatever it is Esther. Tell me your request. And I'll do it for you. And again she defers. And she says. My petition and my request.

And it's almost as if she breaks off in mid-thought. In mid-sentence. In all of our English translations say. My petition and my request is. And then it goes on into verse 8. Come to the next banquet. That's not a petition. That's not a request. The request is. Save my people. Don't let the Jews be destroyed. And you notice what she says in verse 8. If the King regards me with favor. Again she puts it on him. And if it pleases the King to grant my petition. And fulfill my request. Then come to the banquet tomorrow. That I'll prepare for you. Then I will do according to the King's word. And she puts him in a spot. Where it's going to be almost impossible. For him to say no. If you're going to grant my request. Then come to one more feast with me. Come tomorrow to a feast. And your coming to that feast. Will indicate that you really.

[18:47] Are willing to fulfill my request. And so if the King shows up tomorrow. He's pretty much already put his stamp on it. He's going to fulfill it. And she's got the King right where she wants him. And she even says.

Not just. I'll answer the King's question. She says. I'll do according to the King's word. Makes it seem as though. He's the one that's put it all together. She puts it. Makes it. It gives him a feeling of power.

And authority. We'll do according to the King's word. And his word is just. To make your request known to me. She says. I'll do it tomorrow. With the feast. You show up to that feast. It'll be an indicator to me.

That you want to answer my request. And so subtly. Craftily. Wise as a serpent. Gentle as a dove. He's put the King in a position. Where it will be almost impossible. For him to say no.

And of course. With all of Esther's work. And planning. It's God who is at work. There's some important business. That needs to take place. Between now. And the next feast. Between now.

[19:42] And the time. When Esther makes her request. And if she had made it. Right there at that moment. All of these other things. That are going to transpire. Wouldn't have had opportunity to happen. And things perhaps. Would have been very different. And so the Lord puts it in Esther's heart.

To defer. To delay. The request. So that. God can allow these other things. To unfold. To happen. In the time in between now. And the next feast. There's some scheming.

To be done. By Haman. And his family. His friends. There's a sleepless night. Coming for the king. There's some honor. Coming for Mordecai. And things would be very different. Without all of those events.

That come in between. But God's working things together. To bring about his plan. And we see again. What a remarkable thing. God's providence is. And how he works all things to pass. Brings all things to pass. Working them according to the counsel of his will. Sometimes in the scriptures. God's work is loud. It's obvious. Sometimes.

[20:39] Sometimes he thunders from the heavens. And sometimes he sends fire from the sky. And sometimes he sends manna from the sky. To feed his people. And sometimes he rends the Red Sea asunder.

And sometimes he stops the Jordan. And its path. And sometimes he crumbles the walls of cities. But other times the hand of God is more subtle.

It's more quiet. And that's what we see in Esther. But regardless. The hand of God is always at work. Whether it's loud and obvious. Or more subtle like it is here in Esther.

Here it's just the delay of Esther's request. For one day. And all sorts of things are going to happen. God directs people's lives. He uses their personalities. Their tendencies.

To bring about what he desires. Listen to how Ian Duguid puts it. He says. God's plan proceeds in the world around us. It goes forward. Not in spite of our desires and inclinations.

[21:38] Whether sinful or righteous. But precisely through shaping us to be the people we are. We do exactly according to our own desires and temperaments. God's sovereignty operates in such a way that our freedom and responsibility to act are not compromised.

Yet the end result is still exactly what God purposed from the beginning. He doesn't act in spite of us. He works our very personalities into the fabric of His plan.

To bring about exactly what He wants. He uses Esther. In the person that she is. In her weakness. In her frailty. In some of her cunning. He uses all of these things to bring about His good and perfect plan.

What a blessing for us who are clearly fallen. And unable to do any good in and of our own strength. That God is able to use fallen vessels like us.

To bring His plan to pass. Again. And Duguid says. What is more. God achieves His perfect goals. Not just through our best intentions. And most self-sacrificing acts.

[22:43] But even through our greatest sins and compromises. Praise God that He uses fallen instruments like Esther. Like us. To bring about His plan.

And what's God's plan? We know the big picture is that the Jewish people have to be preserved. This is where the Christ is going to come from. From the people of Israel. The tribe of Judah. And God uses fallen.

Frail. Esther. To bring that to pass. And He uses people like you. And like me. Working these things together for good. We love the truth of the providence of God.

Don't just see it in the big things. See it in the little. The subtle things. All things that come to pass. Okay. So we cut right to the next feast.

We want to know what happens. We want to know what's going to come of Esther's request. But not so fast. We've got to wait. We're going to have to wait all the way until chapter 6. To find out what happens.

[23:43] And even further. Until chapter 7. And then until chapter 8. We're not going to get to the banquet until chapter 8. Oh. That's a long time to wait. Or. No. No. We get to it in chapter 7.

I guess. I'm getting ahead of myself. But. But. But. But. We're going to have to wait. There's some other things. We've got to pick up Haman's storyline now. And so we're going to shift our attention from Esther. Over to Haman.

There's some important business to take care of. First. And to understand it. We need to know what's going on with the king's right hand man. Remember Haman. Second in command to the king.

He's got the highest position in the land. Except for the king. And we want to see here in the second half of chapter 5. His joy. His rage.

His pride. And his wife. Haman's a fascinating figure. And we'll see just a little bit of him tonight.

Haman's joy. Haman goes out of this banquet.

[24:39] Just. Walking on sunshine. He's. He's feeling good. He's in a good mood. He's on top of the world. He's just been.

The only person. Invited to a banquet. With the king and queen. Now that's pretty powerful. That's pretty high up in the land. And you can just. Feel his.

Him swelling with. With pride. And satisfaction. What an honor. Not only has the king. Promoted him to. The highest position in the land. Next to himself. Now the queen. Has taken notice as well.

With a personal. Private. Exclusive. Invitation. To these feasts. His star is rising. He's as good. He's on top of the world.

His. His mighty ego. Is being inflated. And stroked. And he loves it. It's what he lives for. The power. The favor of others. Other people. Thinking that he's significant.

[25:33] Thinking that he's something special. And he's just soaking it up. Life is good. He was concerned. With the opinions of men.

And when he had their favor. Things went well. Have you ever been there? On top of the world.

Happy. Maybe not for the same reasons. But. Just joyful. What's it take to sap your joy away?

To rob you of your joy? What's it take? For Haman. It didn't take much. And so we go quickly. From Haman's joy. To Haman's rage. As he's leaving the palace complex.

Top of the world. Going home to share the good news. No doubt. With his wife. And his friends. Do a little bit of bragging. He sees his nemesis. He sees that Jew.

Mordecai. And Mordecai. Not only does he not bow before him. He doesn't even bother to get up out of his seat. Or to tremble in his presence. No acknowledgement whatsoever.

[26:33] Of the significance. The importance of the great Haman. And that's enough to just set. Haman to fuming. To rage. Here's this one insubordinate. This one who doesn't.

Give him the honor. That he thinks he deserves. And that little thing. That one thing. Was enough to suck all the joy. Right out of Haman. His joy that was based on his power. And people thinking.

That he's important and significant. Fled away. When he saw the one guy. Who didn't think. He was significant. With that kind of rage. Haman could have killed Mordecai.

Right on the spot. With probably no consequence. If he can get an edict from the king. To destroy all the Jews. He can kill one of them. Without. Really any repercussions. We would think. But he knows. Mordecai's moment's coming. And so he restrains. He musters. Every ounce of self-control. He's got. To hold that rage in. And he goes home. Fuming. And at home.

[27 : 27] We begin to see his pride. Shine through. Gathers his wife. Mrs. Haman. And all of his friends. And he begins to recount for them. All of his greatness.

What's he doing? It's clearly a prelude to something. He's going to. He's getting somewhere. But on the way. He wants to let them know what's happened. And see if they've got any advice. But to get there. He's going to.

He's going to stroke his own ego a little bit. It's been come crashing down a bit. Because of Mordecai. He's going to stoke it. And so he says. He reminds them of his great wealth. And of his many children. Okay. Haman. We know how many kids you've got. Okay. And then he reminds them of his great power. And how he's been elevated in the land. And how. How significant he is.

How important he is. And on top of this. Besides all this. Guess what happened today. The queen. The queen. Invited me. And only me.

[28 : 23] To a feast. With just her and the king. How about that? Pretty special. Pretty significant. I'm Haman. Number two in all the land.

And you can just. You just hear him telling his family. His wife. And his friends. And maybe they've heard all this before. Maybe they just let it roll out. Oh. Not again. Haman. And maybe this new piece of news.

Like. Oh. Something to make him even bigger. But maybe not. Because we're going to see his wife. Just sort of feeds the thing even more. And so. Maybe they are impressed. Maybe they wish they were like Haman.

Oh. Haman. Got to go to a banquet with the king. And another one tomorrow. And the queen too. And he could use a bit of Solomon's wisdom. The heart of fools.

Blurts out folly. A proud and arrogant man. Mockers. Is his name. He behaves with overweening pride. Maybe closer to the time period even.

[29 : 19] Of Haman. The prophet Jeremiah. Just maybe a generation or two prior. Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom. The strong man boast in his strength.

Or the rich man boast in his riches. Haman. Haman. You're about to find out that pride goeth before a fall. And a haughty spirit before destruction.

But he's full of himself at the moment. And he says. All of this really just to emphasize how much he hates Mordecai.

To emphasize how big of a problem he has. All of this. All of these things I've got. And none of it satisfies me. None of it is enough. So long as Mordecai is sitting.

That Jew Mordecai is sitting in the king's gate. He's just enraged at this man that won't bow before him. What a sad life this man has.

[30 : 17] His joy depended on his ego being inflated. His joy gone in an instant when someone doesn't give him the respect that he thinks he deserves. A man who thinks far too highly of himself.

And there's much that we can learn from Mordecai. Let's pause here for a moment. And learn something from Mordecai. Before we see how at least this chapter wraps up. It really is a sad life that he has.

From a human perspective he has everything. Wealth. Power. He's got family. He's got friends. He's got influence. But as we often see even in our own day.

It's not enough. Just for Haman. One insubordinate is enough to rob him of his joy. To suck all the joy out of life. Why? Because power and the approval of men had become Haman's idol.

If he's got it. He's happy. If he doesn't have it. Then he's not happy. Again Ian Dugood says.

[31 : 13] His emotional strings were being pulled by his idol. Which was public respect. When the idol was fed. He felt good. But when his idol was challenged. It led him to malice and anger.

His joy and his anger were simply the outward expressions of his heart's idolatry. He had elevated himself and the opinion of others so high. And when he had it.

All was well. And when he didn't. All was not well. And all of these things that he had could make no difference. Haman had an idol. Do you?

What is it that can rob you of your joy? In an instant. What is it that can suck the joy right out of your life? It makes you so upset that you just can't.

You forget about all the other blessings that God has given you. And you're just devastated.

Because of this one thing. It's bad weather. Changes your plans. You wake up happy.

[32:11] Eager for your day at the beach. Or the game. The big game that day. Or whatever it is. And you see the clouds bearing the much needed rain. And your countenance becomes as dark as the clouds. Maybe good weather is your idol.

Or whatever the event that was canceled. Is your idol. Can a day of the kids behaving poorly steal your joy away? Maybe your idol has become your kids good behavior.

And therefore your good parenting. Does a loss for your favorite team ruin your day? Maybe that team has crept too close to the center of your affections.

Does the cable or internet or satellite going out unexpectedly. Maybe in the middle of that game. Put you in a fit of rage. As things have become too important.

Too close to the center of your joy. Does an unexpected illness not just make you feel poorly. But destroy your spirit. Your health has become your idol.

[33:17] Your God. Does it ruin your day kids. When your mom and dad say no. Getting your own way.

Has become your idol. No more video games for today. Oh that's devastating. Maybe video games have become. Too important. Too central.

Too all consuming. That you can't live without them. Maybe it's something far more addictive.

Anyway. Maybe it's something more addictive than that. Maybe it's alcohol.

Or pornography. Or partying. Where that. If you have those things. You're okay. And happy. And if you don't. Your life is not right. Even physically. Those things have become an idol.

Does being popular with your friends at school. Give you joy. And when you're not. Does it make you mope and sulk. Too much like Haman. Favor of men. Too important to you. Does having the respect of everyone at work.

[34:17] Except maybe just one nemesis. Just eat you alive. That's Haman coming out in you. It's become too important. Does having money. Financial security make you happy. And when you don't have it.

And things are a little uncertain. Your joy. Sucked right out of your life. Then financial security has become an idol to you. How can I avoid that? And I see some of these things.

That my joy is far too dependent on these things. How can we overcome these highs and lows.

These ups and downs like Haman has. Walking on top of the world one minute. And bam. The next minute he's in the dumps.

Because his joy was dependent on. Something other than the Lord. For the Christian it should be simple. Find the thing that your life is centered around. And if it's not God.

Then you need to remember. That you should have no other gods. Before him. You see God. Never changes. He's always the same.

[35:16] The things that we're learning about Sunday morning. Those things have always been true of God. And they always will be true of God. Doesn't change. He's as powerful today. As he was the day he created the world.

And so. If your joy is in the Lord. The Lord doesn't change.

And so your joy doesn't have to change either. Your. Standing before God is justified. Because of the work of Christ your Savior.

Cannot change. It cannot be taken away from you. If you've trusted in Christ. If you've received him by faith. Then that standing before God. Cannot change. And if your joy is in your salvation in the Lord.

That can't be. And if. If the weather is bad. You're still saved. If. If you have a bad day at work. The Lord's still on the throne.

[36:13] Can still have that joy. Doesn't have to be sucked away. If the Cubs lose. Still have the same joy. Why? Because.

God on the throne. Doesn't change. Your salvation can't be taken away from you. God's love for you. Will not change. And so. If your joy is in the Lord.

It will be. Constant. Remember. Philippians 4. Rejoice in the Lord. Always. And again. I say rejoice. Rejoice in your circumstances. In your idols.

It's going to be all over the map. Good day. Bad day. Happy. Sad. And there will be things. We're still following. There will be things. That cause. Fluctuations. But if our joy is in the Lord. Then it should be constant.

It should be. It should be relatively even. Because God doesn't change. And so. Joy in your circumstances. That's going to let you down. Joy in one particular thing. Your idol.

[37:07] That's become so important to you. And your life revolves around. That's going to let you down. Doesn't matter how much you feed that idol. Eventually. You're going to run out. And your joy will come to an end. It won't satisfy.

But God does satisfy. If you've got Jesus. Who cares if Mordecai kneels in your presence or not. Bishop Hall puts it this way.

How happy were it for us. If we could be so zealously careful. To remove the hindrances. Of our true spiritual joy. To remove those idols. Push them away.

Because that's what's holding you back. From true satisfaction. True joy. True fulfillment in the Lord. Remove the idol. And bask in the joy and glory of the Lord. Well the story doesn't end there with Haman.

And his boasting. And his being mad at Mordecai. The last thing we see is Haman's wife. And in fact really the story is just about to get very interesting. And we'll see that though it seems often the wicked prosper.

[38:11] In reality they are standing on very slippery ground. Now Mrs. Haman, Zeresh. Can't have her poor husband feeling so down. Probably pretty miserable to live with when he's in a mood like this.

And so she's going to feed his idol. She's going to stoke the fire. If Mordecai is such a problem. Then build a really, really tall gallows.

Either a place to have him hung. Or after he's killed in some of the way. A place to display his body. For all to see that anybody that doesn't respect. The authority of the great Haman.

This is what happens. 50 cubits high. It's about 75 to 85 feet tall. You know the water tower in Bremen. The landmark.

The brick and then the standpipe on top. Behind the bank over in downtown. It's about 104 feet high. Looked it up. And so you come down about 30 feet.

[39:09] About where the brick stops. And the storage tank up on the top begins. It's actually just a little bit higher. And that's about 75 feet high. And that's where he wants Haman.

Or excuse me. Mordecai hung for everybody to see. He wants to make an example out of him. And wants. I don't know. Maybe the gallows are as high as his ego is big.

I don't know. Let's make it really big. Let's make a point of it. It's interesting that this is his. Again his submissive wife. The one over whom he has authority.

It's her idea. And he does according to her word again. Have the gallows built. 50 cubits high. And ask the king in the morning to have Mordecai hanged on. And again. You got the decree to kill all of the Jews for no reason.

You can certainly get rid of one for some insubordination. For not bowing before you. Have him hang Mordecai. And then.

[40:06] Go as the king. To the banquet. And be happy. Is there something just a little bit twisted about that to you? Feed your idol by committing murder.

Kill the guy off. And then you'll be happy. And you can go to your banquet and really enjoy it. And not have anything to pull you down. Haman. It's never okay to sin.

To fulfill an idol that's already sinful. And to feed that idol. And just a note here. That Haman doesn't get very good counsel. That's obvious I guess.

But if you should find your kids. Or your spouse. Or your friend. Or even yourself. In a situation. And you begin to see that their life is revolving around something. It's totally centered on something other than the Lord.

Don't tell them to feed that idol. Don't say do whatever it takes to find your full satisfaction in that thing. Show them that that thing is never going to fully satisfy them. And show them the one thing that can satisfy.

[41:11] And that's Christ. And Him alone. You point them to the Savior. Remember. He's the whole point of the story of Esther. God moving history forward. To preserve His people.

The reason that you and I are here today. Is because God saved His people. Through the work of Queen Esther and Mordecai. That's the whole point. And if your joy is found in anything except Christ.

You won't have real joy. You know Haman did have one thing right. For all his faults. He had one thing right. He said I've got wealth. I've got power. I've got family.

I've got friends. I've got significance. And it doesn't satisfy me. Exactly. You can have it all. And even if he had gotten Mordecai.

He still wouldn't have been satisfied. Still would have been something missing. Because if you try to fill up your life. With all the things the world has to offer. Wealth. Power. Whatever it is that makes you tick.

[42:04] Whatever it is you have to have. You can try all you want. To fill yourself up with that. And it will never ever satisfy. And so don't be a fool. Don't be like Haman's wife.

And say yeah. Just keep feeding the idol. Feed it. Feed it. And eventually you'll be satisfied. You won't. Don't feed that idol. Recognize for what it is. It's taking away from your attention.

That belongs to your Lord. It's robbing of your joy. It's not giving you true joy. And find your joy. And your satisfaction. In Christ.

Well. Haman. Likes the idea. The suggestion delighted Haman. Yeah. Really tall gallows. Going to hang Mordecai in the morning.

And so he has the gallows built. Not a thing for the second most powerful man in the land. That night. To get the gallows built. Going to hang one guy from the thing. So 75 feet tall. No problem. Has that thing built.

[43:03] And you can almost imagine that Haman is giddy with excitement for the next day. Going to get rid of Mordecai. Got a feast with the king and queen. And then he'll be right back on top of the world.

Maybe he was so excited that he couldn't sleep very well the night before. Somewhere else in Susa. Not too far away. There's somebody else that couldn't sleep that night. If you want to learn about it.

Stick around for next week. And we'll see what comes of the king's sleepless night. And we'll see if Haman's expectations are met. And we'll be left with just a little bit of suspense.

The author has left us hanging again. He's cut us off. And he's going to switch scenes for us. Come back next week. And we'll see more about the God who's never named in Esther.

But who is so clearly at work. Bringing all things to pass. Come again and we'll learn more from this fascinating story. For now, let's conclude by singing from the overhead.

[44:00] Oh, for a closer walk with God. When your walk with the Lord is close. When you're finding your satisfaction and your joy in Him. Then things of the world begin to fade.

And the things that have been your idols. You begin to see how foolish they are. And so we pray in this hymn. Oh, for a closer walk with God. And we pray that the dearest idol I have known.

Help me to tear it from thy throne. And worship only thee. Think about what your idol is. What is it that's making you tick today? If it's not the Lord. You make this your prayer. Help me to tear that idol away.

And worship only thee. And what a thing. That we can be here tonight in the presence of God. Through the merits of Christ. And we can come with confidence. And we can pray for help. To destroy our idols.

And know that we have an audience with God. And that will hear us. And the powerful God who made us. Who made the world around us. Will give us grace and mercy to help us in our time of need.

[44:56] What a blessed people we are. Father, we give you thanks this night. That it's our privilege to come into your presence through Christ. And to be able to come with confidence.

To be able to come whenever we want to. Into your presence in prayer. And know that you will hear and answer us for Jesus' sake. We are a privileged people.

And so we pray that you would forgive us when we take that privilege. And we trample it underfoot. And we put other things higher than you. Who are our great and glorious God. We pray that you would forgive us for our idolatries.

The things that we cherish in our heart. And forgive us for tying our joy and our satisfaction. And our contentment in this life. To things of the world. And we pray that you would give us grace to every

day.

Find our joy, our satisfaction, our hope in Christ alone. For it is only he that can satisfy. We pray that you would send some running to the Savior tonight for the first time.

[ 45 : 54 ] To find that there can be true joy in this life. They've found emptiness everywhere they've turned. No lasting joy. Point them this night to the Savior. Who can give full and true and abiding and lasting joy.

And peace. Would you do a great work in our midst. And we give you the thanks and praise for all that you have done. All that you will do. And we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.