

(Gospel in the Book of Esther) 1. the Doom of the People

by Roy Hession

The story of Esther teaches us the importance of submission to God's will and the promise of God's presence in times of suffering.

Duration: 54:35

Scripture: Exodus 32:33, Leviticus 17:11, Numbers 14:29, Deuteronomy 2:7, Esther 4:14, Psalm 34:13, Hebrews 12:6

Topics: "Esther"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the theme of redemption and foreshadowing in the word of God. He emphasizes that even though the nation of Israel faced discipline and consequences for their disobedience, they could still have fellowship with God through offerings, sacrifices, and the shedding of blood. The preacher highlights the importance of repentance and submission to God's discipline, using the example of Israel being told to turn back into the wilderness after their disobedience at Kadesh Barnea. He concludes by expressing gratitude for God's grace and redemption, and encourages listeners to humble themselves and trust in God's ability to work in their lives.

Transcript

A little book in the Old Testament, which I have given all too little attention to before, and I imagine you have given little attention to. And yet, as it is with all the Word of God, if you look long enough, you'll see wonderful pictures of the one who is the object of all God's delight, the Lord Jesus. And the book of the Old Testament, which we are going to study in these mornings, these five mornings, is the little book of Esther.

Now, how are you on Esther? Well, it'll all be very fresh to us then, and we are kind of expecting the Lord to teach us something about a part of the Bible which, which is a wonderful part and a very easy part to understand, but we haven't given it, I think, a lot of attention, at least I haven't. Now, we call this the Bible reading, and it will be a bit of Bible reading to begin with. I'm conscious of the fact that we, that I cannot assume familiarity on the part of everybody with the main outline of the story of this bit of Jewish history, and therefore we'll have to inform ourselves about that before we can see its deeper meaning for us.

Now, the book of Esther, now, where does that come? Well, we've been in the book of Chronicles from the trip to Union, where from there you go to Ezra, Nehemiah, and then Esther. All right, got it? Chapter three.

And we're going to read together the narrative contained in chapter three and chapter four.

We'll see what it all means, and it begins after these things. Well, I'll put you in the picture about that in a moment, but this is the heart of the passage we want to think about this morning. After these things did King Ahasuerus promote Haman, the son of Hamadathah, the Agagite, and advanced him and set his seat above all the princes that were with him, and all the king's servants that were in the king's gate bowed and revered Haman, for the king had so commanded concerning him.

But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence. Then the king's servants which were in the king's gate said unto Mordecai, why transgressest thou the king's commandments? Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand, for he had told them that he was a Jew. And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath.

And the bowing was trembling. I understand that even in Uganda today, uh, the subjects of the king, they grovel in his presence, right down, hands and feet. And that was what was ordained with regard to Haman, and what he expected.

But there's one man who wouldn't grovel, and wouldn't do him reverence in that abject way, and that was the Jew, Mordecai. And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath. And he thought scorned to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had showed him the people of Mordecai.

Wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai. And in the first month, that is the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast pull, that is the lock, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, that is the month Adar. He wanted some occult, direction, as to the right moment in which to strike.

And when Haman said unto King Ahasuerus, there is a people scattered abroad, and dispersed among the people, in all the provinces of thy kingdom. And their laws are diverse from all people, neither keep they the king's laws, therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them. If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver.

That was something like three million pounds, by today's values. This man had a vast private fortune, and he prepared to contribute this vast sum into the king's treasuries, if he could have his way, with regard to the people that he'd come to hate. If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver, to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king's treasuries.

And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman, the son of Hamadar, the Agagite, the Jew's enemy. And the king said unto Haman, the silver is given thee, the people also, to do with them as seemeth good to thee. Then where the king's scribes called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and was written according to all that Haman had commanded, unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors that were over every province, and to the rulers of every people of every province, according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language.

There's a little touch which shows the authenticity of the writing. They were to send this message to every province, and every people, according to their writing. The American--the standard revised version puts it, according to their script, and according to their language.

They didn't only have different languages for different provinces, but they had different scripts. And I saw that in India. There are 157 main languages, and many of those languages have an entirely different script.

And here you have the same situation. Just little touches like that that show you you're dealing with an authentic historical document, according to the writing thereof, according to the script thereof, and to every people after their language. In the name of King Ahasuerus was it written, and sealed with the king's ring.

And the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey. The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people that they should be ready against that day. The post went out, being hastened by the king's commandment, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace, and the king and haymen sat down to drink.

But the city Shushan was the place. When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry, and came even before the king's gate, for none might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing, and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

So Esther's maids and her chamberlains came and told it her. Then was the queen exceedingly grieved, and she sent Raymond to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him, but he received it not. Then called Esther.

Esther, of course, was the niece, was it? Mother Comte, yes, I think more or less the niece of Mordecai. She herself was a Jewish, but she was queen within the palace, though nobody knew that she was a Jewish. How fortunate.

What a wonderful provision it was that in the hour of Israel's need, they had a friend in court. The queen, unknown to others, was one of them. Then called Esther for Hattach, one of the king's chamberlains, whom he had appointed to attend upon her, and gave him a commandment to Mordecai to know what it was and why it was.

So Hattach went forth to Mordecai under the street of the city which was before the king's gate, and Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him, and of the sum of money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the Jews to destroy them. Also he gave him the copy of the writing of a decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them, to show it unto Esther and to declare it unto her, and to charge her that she should go in unto the king to make supplication unto him, and to make requests before him for her people. And Hattach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

Again Esther spake unto Hattach and gave him commandment unto Mordecai. All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces do know, she said, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come

unto the king into the inner court who is not called, there is one lord of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden scepter that he may live. But I have not been called to come in unto the king these 30 days.

And they told to Mordecai Esther's words. Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house more than all the Jews, for if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall their enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place. What confidence this man had in the overruling of his god.

It was going to come, but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed. And who knoweth whether thou come to the kingdom for such a time as this. Then Esther bade return Mordecai this answer, go gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days night or day.

I also and my maiden will fast likewise, and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law. And if I perish, I perish. So Mordecai I went his way, and in according to all that Esther had commanded him.

Not only is this book of the Bible a rather neglected one, and we're not as familiar with it as other books, but it is one of the few books in the Bible, am I right to say the only one, in which the name of God does not once appear. Ahasuerus is mentioned many times, and all the principal characters, but God and his title does not appear once in this book. And yet perhaps there's no book in the Bible in which you see the hand of God working on behalf of his people more manifestly and more wonderfully than in this book of Esther.

Now those of you who are reading the Scripture Union will know that we have just come to the end of the second book of Kings. What a story it is. I trust it's given us food for thought, for long deep thoughts as we've come to the end of the second book of Kings.

We've seen what happens to unbrokenness. The trouble with Israel was not that they sinned, but having sinned and God having sent to them the prophets they wouldn't repent. Therefore the wrath arose of God arose against them, as it says, without benefit.

And we see an astonishing judgment fall upon Israel, perhaps the most astonishing judgment that has ever fallen upon a nation in the whole history of the world. That whole nation ends up by being taken captive, and the land completely emptied of its inhabitants, taken to another land, the city and everything destroyed and burnt, and nothing but the poorest of the people left behind to take care of the few remaining. We've seen deportations in the last war of great populations, but nothing surely as complete as this.

And all this was an exact fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah and many others to a people who if they had repented would have found mercy, but they wouldn't. They hardened their neck. In particular with the closing days of Israel in the land, you need to read Jeremiah.

And the clue to Jeremiah's prophecy is simply the pronouncement on what happens to a man who hardens his neck, to a nation that does. God pleaded with them, so to speak, with tears. There are many tears in the book of Jeremiah.

But they wouldn't heed, they wouldn't repent, they wouldn't acknowledge their wrong in turning aside to the gods of the nation. Although he sent unto them his prophets, rising up early as it says, and sending them. And at last they blowed heaven, just as God said it would.

And that people, his chosen people, the object of his special care and of his many blessings, became under his discipline, scattered in a faraway land. And they were told not to expect an early return. There were false prophets, all will belong, we'll be back, we'll be back.

And Jeremiah, who was left with the poorest of the land in Canaan, had to send messages to them, don't believe those false prophets, you're there for a long time, indeed you're going to be there for 70 years, which means a whole lot of the present generation are gathered up. Settle down, expect to be there, and the only place of blessing is to submit to the hand of your God. And he gave them to believe there would be peace and something coming to them.

If instead of hoping for a rapid deliverance from their predicament, they were prepared to submit to it. But there wasn't going to be an end to it. And Jeremiah spoke of the end of that captivity, how in a way that none could guess at the time, that captive people at the end of 70 years would be allowed to come back to their land and rebuild its waste places.

Now, I can only tell you that in the last year I've been most attracted, and my interest has been excited in this particular part of history. I've seen so much wonderful lessons along that various lines. Now, here's this nation in Babylon, what happened to them there? A people under the discipline of God, what happened to them in those 70 long years of captivity? The book of Ezra and the book of Nehemiah tells us how the astonishing promise was fulfilled, and how when Cyrus came to the throne, he made that proclamation that they should go back and rebuild the ruined temple, and that they should pray for the king's life.

But that's at the end of the 70 years, what happened? How did it fail? And there are only two books of the Bible that give you any picture of what happened to God's people under discipline in Babylon. The one is Daniel, which of course, however, is more concerned with the man Daniel himself than with the whole people, but you can see how it was going on with them. And then there is this other book, the book of Ed.

And so it's of great interest for that reason. Now, this book in brief tells us how the Jewish people in captivity were nearly completely annihilated. It would have been pretty well the complete extinction of the Jewish nation.

Had it happened, there wouldn't have been Jews around the world today, as there are, and there wouldn't be the nation of Israel. And it tells us how that annihilation was narrowly averted by the God who still cared for a people under his discipline, who still loved them while they were suffering what was right and proper for them to suffer, and who wasn't going to let his purposes for them fall to the ground nonetheless. Of course, the persecution and annihilation of the Jews is not a new thing in their experience.

This has been, has it not, their experience all down the years. Has any nation been more persecuted? Have there been more attempts to annihilate a nation more than the Jewish nation? We've seen it happen, have we not, in our own lifetime? So this is really characteristic of this people who've been for so long, so many centuries, under the discipline of the God against whom they have sinned. Now, if this plan to exterminate the Jewish nation in captivity had succeeded, it would have meant that all God's promises of grace toward them, that restoration which the prophets spoke about so glowingly, would fall to the ground.

But there would have been a greater disaster. This is the nation from whom God's Messiah is one day going to come. The Holy See, upon which the redemption of the whole world depends, and therefore God has got a great, one may say, a vested interest in the survival and the protection of a people who temporarily are under his discipline.

And their deliverance is almost as important as was their exodus out of the slavery of Egypt. Normally that is regarded as the beginning of their life as a nation. And no feast so important in the Jewish feast as the Passover feast.

But there's another feast still in the Jewish calendar which is regarded almost as important as the Passover, and that is the Feast of Purim, which was instituted at the book of Esther, and I believe is still kept to this day to celebrate that wonderful deliverance that God gave to his people when they were so nearly finished and gone. Now I want to pause there to make a very obvious application, but an important one. Here's a people under God's discipline.

You might say a people under God's frown, but there's never a frown on the face of God. Behind a frowning providence, all the time there's a shining, smiling face, be assured of that, but they're under his discipline nonetheless. They're suffering under the mighty hand of God, and yet they're loved, and yet they're cared for.

They're still the object of the special care of God, even while they're suffering under his discipline. And it's an interesting thing to note that although the name of God does not appear in the book of Esther, in actual fact, in ordinary words, five times it's hidden in the text. The old Hebrew commentators used to point it out, and in some of the old manuscript, certain letters are put in bigger letters, and there are five hidden acrosses in the Hebrew of the book of Esther of the name Jehovah, in the shadows, unknown, and unseen may be, Jehovah was there.

He had not cast off his people, although they were temporally under his discipline. I'm not going to attempt to explain those across fix, it's quite a technical matter, but if you ever get your hands on Bullinger's Companion Bible, in one of his appendices, you will have the whole thing explained, most intriguing. And there, because it doesn't come out, of course, in English, but in the Hebrew, apparently it does.

Now, the thing for us, application to us, is this. There are times, friend, when you are under the discipline of God, because of playing with sin, and because of refusal to repent, and he has to lay his hand heavy upon us. Because of that, in fact, some of us may have missed the best in their lives, a lovely purpose that God had for us has gone begging, and some of us may feel they were having to take what is really only second best.

Things have gone wrong, and you've been deprived of blessed prospects. And there may be some of us, in one degree or another, who hasn't known it. Suffering under the mighty hand of God, under discipline, but your love nonetheless.

You're cared for nonetheless. And even in that experience of discipline, you and I may walk with Jesus through his precious life. As an old hymn says, somewhere in the shadows, you'll find Jesus.

If a man will only submit to the discipline that God puts upon him, not try and get out of it, not rebel against it, but submit to it as a penitent man, he will find God with him in the very discipline that God may still decree he's got to pass through. I remember being struck by that fact when Israel was told to turn and go

back into the wilderness after their disobedience at Kadesh Barnea. What a purpose was waiting for them, victory in the promised land, but they looked at the giants and saw themselves as grasshoppers, instead of looking to God and seeing the giants as grasshoppers.

And they rebelled and turned back. God said, turn, you go back into the wilderness. All this nation, this generation going to die out in the wilderness is only going to be the children who are going to go in.

There's a nation under his discipline. And yet straight away, there follows chapter after chapter about the offering, about the sacrifices, about the blood, all of which had still to be offered and presented even while they were under discipline, which seemed to me to show that they could yet be in fellowship with God. They could yet walk with God.

If they were willing to repent, maybe that situation couldn't be immediately recovered, but if they were willing to submit to it, God would be with them in it. I would know how to deliver them through those 40 years, which indeed he did. I would know how to protect them from any further attacks of the enemy.

And so it is with us. What wonderful grace. And the disciplines which we sometimes find ourselves under prove to be means of grace.

We come out with a testimony of what God does for sinners. And although we spoiled things, yet we could walk with Jesus. The precious blood could yet be sprinkled on our past, and in a new thing that came.

I know a man who had to leave England. A well-known Christian worker. He couldn't stay any longer.

He'd mess things up. But he's a penitent man, and he's walked with God in Canada. He's got a testimony.

He doesn't necessarily hide it, but God's used him. Under discipline. The first purpose may be he had to go, but because he was a penitent man, he walked with God in the new situation and found Jesus precious.

So friend, when you find yourself under discipline in one degree or another, don't frantically try to get out of it. Then you're next. This is what is right and pitiful for me from the hand of a God who chases me, but who loves me nonetheless.

For whom the Lord loveth, he chases me, and he scourges every son whom he receives. And so we see these people still the object of the guardian care of their covenant God. Hidden into this book is this acrostic of Jehovah, the God who never changed in his grace, though oft times he has the discipline to teach us deeper lessons which are still his.

God does not cast off his people whom he foreknew. I am foreknown. Foreknown before the foundation of the world.

Then my name was graven on his hand. Then my name was graven on his heart. I know that while in heaven he stands, no tongue can bid me thence depart.

I may have to come under discipline if he will. Well, this is all preliminary. I now come to what I feel is the main message and teaching of this lovely book for us in these days.

The deliverance that God wrought for that people from this imminent disaster, I find him to be an amazing, full, and accurate picture of that great deliverance that God has wrought for a sinning world by our Lord

Jesus Christ. I don't want to stretch and force this passage, this scripture, but I'm convinced the Holy Ghost meant this. You see, the Holy Ghost is occupied with Jesus.

He's so thrilled with this great redemption that God was bringing to the world that he couldn't wait for him to come. He had to let out the secret in all sorts of ways. And thus it is, our Old Testament is full of Christ, it's full of redemption, it's full of this great thing that God is going to do in foreshadowing.

Please turn the cassette over now. Do not fast wind it in either direction. Full of this great thing that God is going to do in foreshadowing.

Never think that redemption is simply a part of the divine story. It is the divine story. You wouldn't have any of the Bible at all.

You wouldn't have the story of creation. You wouldn't have any of this history. You wouldn't have the story of the fall.

But the fact that God was only using that as the backdrop for this wonderful old story of Jesus and his love, this is the divine story. It's the one thing the whole deity is occupied with, redemption. What a God is our.

There's history here and much else that's incidental, merely the backdrop to this great story. And so it is, we have all these wonderful intimations of the grace that is to come to us. Now, we've all seen pictures and read stories of the ruins of ancient civilizations in the Middle East.

There's something frightfully fascinating about the finds of archaeology. What a civilization it was. How vast are the palaces? And haven't you often thought, I'd like to sort of, what was it all like? It's astonishing.

Well here, my friends, the book of Esther, you're introduced into that very world. Here you see those ancient civilizations at their height, their vast palaces, this emperor, ruler, a complete ruler of 127 provinces, with his harem and his eunuchs looking after every wish, the whole setup. And I think the more I read it, the more fascinated I become with it, even from that angle.

Well, we're going to just give you the brief story up to this point, and then come to the main lesson, I think, for us up to this point. Ahasuerus was the king over 127 provinces, the greatest world empire then known, the empire of the Medes and Persians. Vashti was his queen, and she failed to obey her lord over a certain matter, and come and display herself before the feast.

Maybe it was modesty that led her to refuse. But it was regarded as an important thing because men were very jealous of their rights, and they felt that if the queen was permitted to get away with this, what would happen to every other household? And men wanted to establish their authority, and so they all advised the king that this queen should be deposed, which indeed she was. But then you had a bachelor king, and that was something almost unknown in the East, and there was a search for another queen.

It's real Eastern, you know, all these women, cow from all over the empire, put into one harem, they visit the queen, the king, and then put into another one, and the one he likes best, and loves best, is to be his queen. Right the way through this province, this great empire is scattered. This alien people, the Jews, they don't appear to be very badly treated.

They find their place throughout the province, and they found their work to do, but they're an alien people, away from their land, and away from the temple of their god. And the queen, the girl who ultimately gains favor with King Ahasuerus, is, if you please, a Jewess, Esther. Mordecai is her uncle.

And she, in due course, is received into the palace, and there, right within the palace of this greatest monarch of all, is Esther, the Jewess, loved and honored by the king. As in all good stories, there's a villain of the piece, and that's Haman. Haman was a nobleman who became the favorite of the king, and upon whom the king lavished every conceivable honor he could.

And this Haman became the enemy of the Jews, possessed with an insensate hatred of them, who couldn't be satisfied unless every one of them was exterminated. And he plots their extermination. Now Haman, I think, as I read the scripture, is obviously meant by the Holy Spirit to portray that great enemy, the devil.

Did you know the word Satan is a Hebrew word for adversary? And he hates the children of God, and he hates the race of men whom God created. And the devil, this arch-enemy, has plotted and planned the overthrow of God's race, to plunge a whole world into ruin and destruction, and misery. Not only in the next world, but in this world too, while we're alive.

Now it's very interesting to note how it was that Haman became the enemy of the Jews. Why did he have this hatred? Well, we read in chapter 3 how it all happened. This man was exalted above every other nobleman, given every conceivable honor the king could, and he became filled with a self-consuming pride.

Nothing would please him than being absolutely number one next to the king. And maybe if he got there in actual fact, he might have even plotted the king's overthrow too. Well, he had pretty well it all his own way, except in the case of one man.

Here was this man, Mordecai the Jew. He had some official business, his place was in the king's gate. And Haman had to go to and fro.

And whenever Haman came, everybody got off what they were on, chairs, horses, and they groveled in the dust before this man. And that's what he liked. He wanted to be exalted above the whole race, except for Mordecai.

And Mordecai would not bow to this man. I don't know why. He was called Haman the Agakite, the Agakite, how do you pronounce it? Descendants of Agag, the Amalekite.

You remember, Saul should have slain Agag, but failed to, and therefore sandaled him. The Amalekites were the ancient enemies of Israel. And this man somehow or other was a descendant of Agag.

And maybe for that reason, Mordecai was not going to bow and grovel in the dust before this man, and he stood his feet. And therefore he incurred the wrath of Haman. Now, an ordinary man doesn't mind too much if other people don't take off their hats to him.

Some men, even in high position, aren't all that bothered if you don't call them sir, but a proud man is. The slightest failure in respect is a mortal blow to him. And that was how it was with Haman.

And therefore he vowed to take it out of Mordecai. But verse 6 of chapter 3 says, he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone. He plotted something bigger.

He sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai. And so his hatred of the Jews was a result of his hatred of one man. And that hatred of that man was due to his terrible, overweening pride.

And my friends, that is precisely the history of the devil's animosity toward the human race. It isn't because he hates us for our own sake. No, it's because the great sin in the heart of Satan is pride.

And that was the reason why he was cast out. There's a strange prophetic passage in Isaiah 14 which tells us a little bit about the ancient history of this great spiritual being, or unspiritual being, if you like. In Isaiah 14, perhaps you would like to look at it.

Verse 12, and this is generally thought to be a prophetic of Satan. Isaiah 14, verse 12, How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning? How art thou cut down to the ground which does weaken the nations? For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.

I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation of the sides of the Lord. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will be like the Most High.

Yet hast thou been brought down to hell, to the sides of the flood. Satan apparently was one of the cherubim. But pride came in, how we don't know.

And he conceived the idea of exalting himself even to be like the Most High. And for that reason, this great angelic being was cast out of heaven, for pride. And he thereafter stalked the earth as the adversary of the one who cast him out.

When he was seeking to be like the Most High in glory, there was always one yet above him. Not only God, but the one who is called the Word of God. Don't get the idea that the Lord Jesus began his existence in the manger.

He began way back. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. There in the beginning was the second person of the Trinity, the object of the worship of all the other cherubim.

And maybe this cherubim got a long way up, and maybe all the other cherubims were according him some honor, but there was one that wouldn't, the eternal Son of God. And it was because of him that he was cast out of heaven. And he became the enemy of that beloved one, in whom all God's glory shined, who was to reveal God as he really is.

And he hated him. And because Satan hated God and his Son, that he plotted the overthrow of God's creation. You who are fathers, I know the way in which you could be most hurt.

Not by somebody hitting you. You could take that. You might even retaliate.

Might not always be right to do so, but you might. But for someone to hit and kick your little child whose defenseless. And an enemy, if he wanted to hurt you, would somehow make things difficult for your child.

He might turn people against that child at school. It isn't that he hates the child so much, he hates you! And my, wasn't that the other. And that was the reason why Satan plotted the overthrow of the human race.

And so we can say of Satan, what is here said of Haman, Satan thinks caught to lay hands on Jesus alone if he can. He plots and plans the overthrow of that creation that came into being as an act of love from the action of both father and son. And in due course that plot was hatched and carried through.

That was the reason why Satan appeared in the Garden of Eden. And you remember he maligned God to that couple. God's given you a lot of things, but he doesn't want you to know too much.

He doesn't, he mustn't touch that tree. He's keeping you an ignorant. He's not fair.

God does know, he said, the day you eat of that tree, you'll be like him. He doesn't want you to be keeping it down. And you know, it's likely that went on for months.

In C.S. Lewis' book, A Voyage to Venus, he tells how the fall was narrowly averted on Venus. You ought to get it, it's on the bookstore, I think. It's a great story.

And you know, the agent of the devil on Venus went at it with one woman, day and night. He only stopped when she was too tired and had to go, had to sleep. As soon as she was awake, he was at it, insinuating.

And then mine had been like that for a long, long time. At last it penetrated. They began to believe the devil's lie about God, that he wasn't as loving as he said he was, that have to do something for themselves.

And at last he got man to make, commit that first sin, and take the forbidden fruit. And his eyes were opened. It did prove indeed to be the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

He'd known good all along because he was doing it. He'd only known evil as a vague possibility, but now he knew it as a dreadful fact. He'd done it.

His eyes were opened, the devil was right, but to see his nakedness. And as a result, man had to be driven out of the garden. Not because God wanted him out, but because God was holy, and couldn't permit sinners to remain as sinners, uncleansed, unforgiven in his presence, and he couldn't forgive them unless they repented.

And there's no sign of repentance in the garden of Eden. And so God had to drive out, the saddest thing he ever had to do, his dear man and woman from the garden. That's just what the devil wanted.

He knew what God wanted. He knew what was the law of the universe. If he's going to get this first man and woman to break that divine law, he knew man would have to be driven out.

And he knew, in a sense, that any action he took to enforce that driving out would have the backing of the law of God itself. Do you think this is too crude an illustration of the devil being the jailer? He puts men imprisoned as the jailer. What do wicked men know? He's got the backing of the law.

The man who's the wicked man is the criminal. And the law, its processes go forward, and sooner or later that man finds himself under the control of a jailer. And we're told that the devil is he who has the authority of death.

Not even God can deny his right to see to it that the wages of sin are duly paid out to the sinner. And he sees that they are in all sorts of coins. And so we have that great text, the wages of sin is death, and back of the death is the devil.

He's got what he wants, and he camps down and sees you get it in full measure, and back of him, if you please, is the divine law. That's what is meant in 1 Corinthians 15. The strength of sin is what? The law.

That is what puts you under the dominion of the accusations of sin, the law that we've broken. And elsewhere, the devil is called the accuser of the brethren. He's got even the law on his side.

And that is the plight in which Satan has got us and the whole world. I believe that that great text, the wages of sin is death, is to be applied much more broadly than perhaps we usually do. Usually we think that the wages of sin is death means that after this life there's eternal doom.

That is true. But oh, it applies to death in every conceivable form. The wages of sin is no peace.

The wages of sin is trouble. The wages of sin is an unhappy home. The wages of sin is problem upon problem.

The wages of sin is a heart that condemns itself, a heart that feels in the dark, a heart that feels itself cut off from God. These are all the wages of sin long before you ever face the great white throne. And even the saints of God may know the wages of sin in this sense.

They won't stand before the great white throne if they're eternally saved. But they suffer many of these installments of the wage when sin comes in and we don't repent. And some of us may be in the midst of some of those wages, in problems, in difficulties.

You haven't got a praising heart, you aren't free. And so it is. We've come under this plot that Satan has made.

The wages of sin is death. What a problem. And this is what Satan has planned.

You see, as I understand it, the reason why Satan gets men to sin is not merely for them to do something unethical, not merely to get them to offend their loving heavenly Father, but to give himself the right to get them, to accuse them, to condemn them, to tell them of what the law says about them. And of course he goes beyond that, he tells them, now it's no good. Can't even go to God.

And so many of us may find ourselves in situations like this. But the main thing of all this story is to show the provision of God for a people in such a time as this. Here's this people, the message goes out to all the provinces that on a certain day, everybody's to exterminate every Jew they see and take his property as plunder.

Wherever that edict went out, those horsemen went out and the news was promulgated, there was great wailing and mourning among the Jews. Even the Medes and Persians were perplexed about it. The only ones that were glad were their enemies.

And this edict could not be countermanded. The law of the Medes and Persians couldn't be changed. And there seemed to be absolutely no way out for God's people.

And that is the situation. The edict's gone out. And friends, in a sense, apart from what we're going to hear about in the last minute, there is no way out.

It seems to me that you and I have a limitless power to commit sin. You can commit sin, anything you like, there's nothing to stop you. But once you've committed it, there's nothing you can do to get out of it, to get out of the situation it produces, to get out of the condemnation it brings.

Dear friend, there's no way out. I'm interested in that verse. What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul? To gain the world, he has to part with what is called his soul, the prospects of salvation and much else.

Then he goes on to say, and what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Having seen the bad bargain he's made, he's lost his precious soul for a paltry thing of nothing, he can't reverse it. He's got nothing which is legal tender that can buy his lost prospects back. And that is the situation at every conceivable level.

We have limitless power to commit sin. But having committed it, there's nothing we can do to get out of the situation it brings. That was the situation of Israel, now.

No wonder they were mourned. But God had provided for that very contingency. There was a Jewess, unknown to the king and other people, within the king's palace.

Mordecai, I knew it. And the moment he saw this situation, he sent a message to one person. Their hope was in one person only, Esther.

You know when you deal with the types and foreshadows of the Lord Jesus, sometimes one figure isn't enough to give you a picture of Jesus, it needs two. And in this book you need both Mordecai and Esther to give you the complete picture of what Jesus is. And he said, who knows, he said to her, that thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this.

And we read in 1 John 1, if any man sin, if any man gets himself in pickle, if any man is in a situation like this, if any child of God gets into the dark and doesn't know how to get out, if there are situations he doesn't know how to get free from, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And in Hebrews we're told, he ever lives, to make intercession for a sin of failing people who get themselves into trouble through their own fault. It's only a lie of the devil that tells you, you can't go to him now.

It's your fault. If it were not your fault, you could say, Lord, you know it's not my fault. But when you feel it is your fault, you can't do anything, you feel, that's a complete lie.

The provision that God has made in his Son is for people whose fault it is. Five bleeding wounds he bears, received on Calvary, they pour effectual prayers, they strongly plead for me, forgive him, oh forgive, they cry, nor let that ransomed sinner die. Jesus has come to the king for such a time as this, and the time may be a situation of our own creating, we're very slow to say it's the other person's creating, but in this conference many a one has seen it wasn't the husband who was wrong, though on the paper you might say, he seemed to be more wrong than the other, but when the Holy Spirit spoke to this or that one, they saw it wasn't the other, it was them.

Well, it's a terrible thing to see that the situation I'm in is my fault. I didn't feel so bad when it's the other person's fault, but if it's my fault, what a terrible situation. Nothing of the sort.

For the moment it's your fault, that person has an equity. And you become a fit object for grace. Grace is only for guilty.

If you're not guilty, then you aren't within the sphere where grace operates. But if you're guilty, and you prepare to acknowledge that, I don't care what the situation is, Jesus has come to the kingdom for such a time as this. What is the time, you're in? I don't care what it is.

This is the lovely word for us as we pray. The Lord Jesus has come to the kingdom for such a time as this, and I want to say this, all his exalted station, all the power that is his, is to be used for the emancipation, the deliverance, the blessing of his people. There's no problem that he can't solve.

As someone has said, Jesus loves not only to forgive the messer, but to un-mess the mess. He's here for this purpose. He's come to the kingdom for such a time.

And so although Satan thinks he's won, he hasn't taken the counsel. But I've got an advocate. But I've got a friend at court.

I've got one to whom all authority is given. And he knows how to deliver a poor failing child of God who's come here so sad. And to take away our burdens and to free us from our chains and give us joy unspeakable and full of glory.

What a wonderful redemption. What a wonderful story of grace. And so we shall see how it all works out.

God's given us a wonderful picture of it all, easy to understand, so its meaning will be inescapable. Let us pray. Lord Jesus, we began by singing, I am not worthy, and we're not.

You think of all this wonderful provision. And we think of the long weary way by which you got to the king's palace to become there the representative and guardian of thy people. We are not worthy, Lord.

We want to thank thee. There's hope for us. Hope for the most tangled of us.

Hope for those who've got difficult personalities and neuroses as well as problems in our circumstances. Hope for those of us who've been living long without God and without peace. Lord Jesus, reveal thyself.

Show thyself as having come to the kingdom for such a time as this, for such a situation as we are in. And may we see what thy grace can do for people who humble themselves before thee. So we praise thee in thy dear name.

Amen. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen.

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