

CHAPTER 6

It is a very surprising scene that opens in this chapter. Haman, when he hoped to be Mordecai's judge, was made his page, to his great confusion and mortification; and thus way was made for the defeat of Haman's plot and the deliverance of the Jews.

I. The providence of God recommends Mordecai in the night to the king's favour (v. 1-3).

II. Haman, who came to incense the king against him, is employed as an instrument of the king's favour to him (v. 4-11).

III. From this his friends read him his doom, which is executed in the next chapter (v. 12-14). And now it appears that Esther's intercession for her people was happily adjourned, “De die in diem” — from day to day.

TOC ESTHER 6:1-3

THE RECORD OF MORDECAI'S LOYALTY

Now Satan put it into the heart of Haman to contrive Mordecai's death we read in the foregoing chapter; how God put it into the heart of the king to contrive Mordecai's honour we are here told. Now, if the king's word will prevail above Haman's (for, though Haman be a great man, the king in the throne must be above him), much more will the *counsel of God stand*, whatever *devices there are in men's hearts*. It is to no purpose therefore for Haman to oppose it, when both God and the king will have Mordecai honoured, and in this juncture too, when his preferment, and Haman's disappointment, would help to ripen the great affair of the Jewish deliverance for the effort that Esther was to make towards it the next day. Sometimes delay may prove to have been good conduct. Stay awhile, and we may have done the sooner. *Cunctando restituit rem — He conquered by delay*. Let us trace the steps which Providence took towards the advancement of Mordecai.

I. *On that night could not the king sleep. His sleep fled away* (so the word is); and perhaps, like a shadow, the more carefully he pursued it the further

it went from him. Sometimes we cannot sleep because we fain would sleep. Even after a banquet of wine he could not sleep when Providence had a design to serve in keeping him waking. We read of no bodily indisposition he was under, that might break his sleep; but God, *whose gift sleep is*, withheld it from him. Those that are ever so much resolved to cast away care cannot always do it; they find it in their pillows when they neither expect nor welcome it. He that commanded 127 provinces could not command one hour's sleep. Perhaps the charms of Esther's conversation the day before gave occasion to his heart to reproach him for neglecting her, and banishing her from his presence, though she was the wife of his bosom, for above thirty days; and that might keep him waking. An offended conscience can find a time to speak when it will be heard.

II. When he could not sleep he called to have the book of records, the Journals of his reign, read to him, v. 1. Surely he did not design that that should lull him asleep; it would rather fill his head with cares, and drive away sleep. But God put it into his heart to call for it, rather than for music or songs, which the Persian kings used to be attended with (^{<2768>}Daniel 6:18) and which would have been more likely to compose him to rest. When men do that which is unaccountable we know not what God intends by it. Perhaps he would have this book of business read to him that he might improve time and be forming some useful projects. Had it been king David's case, he would have found some other entertainment for his thoughts; when he could not sleep he would have remembered God and meditated upon him (^{<1946>}Psalm 64:6), and, if he would have had any book read to him, it would have been his Bible; for *in that law did he meditate day and night*.

III. The servant that read to him either lighted first on that article which concerned Mordecai, or, reading long, came to it at length. Among other things it was found written that Mordecai had discovered a plot against the life of the king which prevented the execution of it, v. 2. Mordecai was not in such favour at court that the reader should designedly pitch upon that place; but Providence directed him to it; nay, if we may believe the Jews' tradition (as bishop Patrick relates it), opening the book at this place he turned over the leaves, and would have read another part of the book, but the leaves flew back again to the same place where he opened it; so that he was forced to read that paragraph. How Mordecai's good service was recorded we read ^{<1702>}Esther 2:23, and here it is found upon record.

IV. The king enquired *what honour and dignity had been done to Mordecai* for this, suspecting that this good service had gone unrewarded, and, like Pharaoh's butler, remembering it as *his fault this day*, ^{<0410>}Genesis 41:9. Note, The law of gratitude is a law of nature. We ought particularly to be grateful to our inferiors, and not to think all their services such debts to us but that they make us indebted to them. Two rules of gratitude may be gathered from the king's enquiry here: —

- 1.** Better honour than nothing. If we cannot, or need not, make recompence to those who have been kind to us, yet let us do them honour by acknowledging their kindnesses and owning our obligations to them.
- 2.** Better late than never. If we have long neglected to make grateful returns for good offices done us, let us at length bethink ourselves of our debts.

V. The servants informed him that nothing had been done to Mordecai for that eminent service; in the king's gate he sat before, and there he still sat. Note,

- 1.** It is common for great men to take little notice of their inferiors. The king knew not whether Mordecai was preferred or no till his servants informed him. High spirits take a pride in being careless and unconcerned about those that are below them and ignorant of their state. The great God takes cognizance of the meanest of his servants, knows what dignity is done them and what disgrace.
- 2.** Humility, modesty, and self-denial, though in God's account of great price, yet commonly hinder men's preferment in the world. Mordecai rises no higher than the king's gate, while proud ambitious Haman gets the king's ear and heart; but, though the aspiring rise fast, the humble stand fast. Honour makes proud men giddy, but *upholds the humble in spirit*, ^{<0223>}Proverbs 29:23.
- 3.** Honour and dignity are rated high in the king's books. He does not ask, What reward has been given Mordecai? what money? what estate? but only, What honour? — a poor thing, and which, if he had not wherewith to support it, would be but a burden.

4. The greatest merits and the best services are often overlooked and go unrewarded among men. Little honour is done to those who best deserve it, and fittest for it, and would do most good with it. See ^{<0014>}Ecclesiastes

9:14-16. The acquisition of wealth and honour is usually a perfect lottery, in which those that venture least commonly carry off the best prize. Nay,

5. Good services are sometimes so far from being a man's preferment that they will not be his protection. Mordecai is at this time, by the king's edict, doomed to destruction, with all the Jews, though it is owned that he deserved dignity. Those that faithfully serve God need not fear being thus ill paid.

~~1706~~ ESTHER 6:4-11

THE HONOUR CONFERRED ON MORDECAI

It is now morning, and people begin to stir.

I. Haman is so impatient to get Mordecai hanged that he comes early to court, to be ready at the king's levee, before any other business is brought before him, to get a warrant for his execution (v. 4), which he makes sure that he shall have at the first word. The king would gratify him in a greater thing than that; and he could tell the king that he was so confident of the justice of his request, and the king's favour to him in it, that he had got the gallows ready: one word from the king would complete his satisfaction.

II. The king is so impatient to have Mordecai honoured that he sends to know who is in the court that is fit to be employed in it. Word is brought him that Haman is in the court, v. 5. *Let him come in*, says the king, the fittest man to be made use of both in directing and in dispensing the king's favour; and the king knew nothing of any quarrel he had with Mordecai. Haman is brought in immediately, proud of the honour done him in being admitted into the king's bed-chamber, as it should seem, *before he was up*; for let the king but give orders for the dignifying of Mordecai, and he will be easy in his mind and try to sleep. Now Haman thinks he has the fairest opportunity he can wish for to solicit against Mordecai; but the king's heart is as full as his, and it is fit he should speak first.

III. The king asks Haman how he should express his favour to one whom he had marked for a favourite: *What shall be done to the man whom the king delights to honour?* v. 6. Note, It is a good property in kings, and other superiors, to delight in bestowing rewards and not to delight in

punishing. Parents and masters should take a pleasure in commending and encouraging that which is good in those under their charge.

IV. Haman concludes that he himself is the favourite intended, and therefore prescribes the highest expressions of honour that could, for once, be bestowed upon a subject. His proud heart presently suggested, "To whom will the king delight to do honour more than to myself? No one deserves it so well as I," thinks Haman, "nor stands so fair for it." See how men's pride deceives them.

1. Haman had a better opinion of his merits than there was cause for: he thought none so worthy of honour as himself. It is a foolish thing for us thus to think ourselves the only deserving persons, or more deserving than any other. The deceitfulness of our own hearts appears in nothing so much as in the good conceit we have of ourselves and our own performances, against which we should therefore constantly watch and pray.

2. He had a better opinion of his interest than there was reason for. He thought the king loved and valued no one but himself, but he was deceived. We should suspect that the esteem which others profess for us is not so great as it seems to be or as we are sometimes willing to believe it is, that we may not think too well of ourselves nor place too much confidence in others. Now Haman thinks he is carving out honour for himself, and therefore does it very liberally, v. 8, 9. Nay, he does it presumptuously, prescribing honours too great to be conferred upon any subject, that he must be dressed in the royal robes, wear the royal crown, and ride on the king's own horse; in short, he must appear in all the pomp and grandeur of the king himself, only he must not carry the sceptre, the emblem of power. He must be attended by one of *the king's most noble princes*, who must be his lacquey, and all the people must be made to take notice of him and do him reverence; for he must ride in state through the streets, and it must be *proclaimed before him*, for his honour, and the encouragement of all to seek the ruler's favour, *Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honour*, which had the same intention with that which was proclaimed before Joseph, *Bow the knee*; for every good subject will honour those whom the king delights to honour. And shall not every good Christian then honour those whom the King of kings delights to honour and call the *saints that are on the earth the excellent ones*?

V. The king confounds him with a positive order that he should immediately go himself and put all this honour upon Mordecai the Jew, v. 10. If the king had but said, as Haman expected, *Thou art the man*, what a fair opportunity would he have had to do the errand he came on, and to desire that, to grace the solemnity of his triumphs, Mordecai, his sworn enemy, might be hanged at the same time! But how is he thunderstruck when the king bids him not to order all this to be done, but to do it himself to Mordecai the Jew, the very man he hated above all men and whose ruin he was now designing! Now, it is to no purpose to think of moving any thing to the king against Mordecai when he is *the man whom the king delights to honour*. Solomon says, *The heart of the king is unsearchable* (~~<1762>~~ Proverbs 25:3), but it is not unchangeable.

VI. Haman dares not dispute nor so much as seem to dislike the king's order, but, with the greatest regret and reluctance imaginable, brings it to Mordecai, who I suppose did no more cringe to Haman now than he had done, valuing his counterfeit respect no more than he had valued his concealed malice. The apparel is brought, Mordecai is dressed up, and rides in state through the city, recognized as the king's favourite, v. 11. It is hard to say which of the two put a greater force upon himself, proud Haman in putting this honour upon Mordecai, or humble Mordecai in accepting it: the king would have it so, and both must submit. Upon *this* account it was agreeable to Mordecai as it was an indication of the king's favour, and gave hope that Esther would prevail for the reversing of the edict against the Jews.

~~<1762>~~ ESTHER 6:12-14

THE HONOUR CONFERRED ON MORDECAI

We may here observe,

I. How little Mordecai was puffed up with his advancement. he *came again to the king's gate* (v. 12); he returned to his place and the duty of it immediately, and minded his business as closely as he had done before. Honour is well bestowed on those that are not made proud and idle by it, and will not think themselves above their business.

II. How much Haman was cast down with his disappointment. he could not bear it. To wait upon any man, especially Mordecai, and at this time, when he hoped to have seen him hanged, was enough to break such a proud heart as he had. He *hasted to his house mourning, and having his head covered*, as one that looked upon himself as sunk and in a manner condemned. What harm had it done him to stoop thus to Mordecai? Was he ever the worse for it? Was it not what he himself proposed to be done by *one of the king's most noble princes*? Why then should he grudge to do it himself? But that will break a proud man's heart which would not break a humble man's sleep.

III. How his doom was, out of this event, read to him by his wife and his friends: “If Mordecai be, as they say he is, *of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall*, though but in a point of honour, never expect to *prevail against him*; for thou *shalt surely fall before him*,” 5:13. Miserable comforters were they all; they did not advise him to repent, and ask Mordecai's pardon for his bad design against him, but foretold his destiny as fatal and unavoidable. Two things they foresaw: —

1. That Haman would be disappointed in his enterprise against the Jews: “*Thou shalt not prevail* to root out that people. Heaven plainly fights against thee.”

2. That he himself would be destroyed: *Thou shalt surely fall before him*. The contest between Michael and the dragon will not be a drawn battle; no, Haman must fall before Mordecai. Two things they grounded their prognostications upon: —

(1.) This Mordecai was *of the seed of the Jews*; *feeble Jews* their enemies sometimes called them, but formidable Jews they sometimes found them. They are a holy seed, a praying seed, in covenant with God, and a seed that the Lord hath all along blessed, and therefore let not their enemies expect to triumph over them.

(2.) Haman had begun to fall, and therefore he was certainly a gone man. It has been observed of great court-favourites that when once they have been frowned upon they have fallen utterly, as fast as they rose; it is true of the church's enemies that when God begins with them he will make an end. As for God his work is perfect.

IV. How seasonably he was now sent for to the banquet that Esther had prepared, v. 14. He thought it seasonable, in hopes it would revive his drooping spirits and save his sinking honour. But really it was seasonable because, his spirits being broken by this sore disappointment, he might the more easily be run down by Esther's complaint against him. The wisdom of God is seen in timing the means of his church's deliverance so as to manifest his own glory.