

# CHAPTER 5

The last news we had of Haman left him in his cups, 3:15. Our last news of queen Esther left her in tears, fasting and praying. Now this chapter brings in,

**I.** Esther in her joys, smiled upon by the king and honoured with his company at her banquet of wine (v. 1-8).

**II.** Haman upon the fret, because he had not Mordecai's cap and knee, and with great indignation setting up a gallows for him (v. 9-14). Thus those that sow in tears shall reap in joy, but the triumphing of the wicked is short.

## ESTHER 5:1-8

### ESTHER'S APPROACH TO THE KING

Here is,

**I.** Esther's bold approach to the king, v. 1. When the time appointed for their fast was finished she lost no time, but on the third day, when the impression of her devotions were fresh upon her spirit, she addressed the king. When the heart is enlarged in communion with God it will be emboldened in doing and suffering for him. Some think that the three days' fast was only one whole day and two whole nights, in all which time they did not take any food at all, and that this is called *three days*, as Christ's lying in the grave so long is. This exposition is favoured by the consideration that on the third day the queen made her appearance at court. Resolutions which have difficulties and dangers to break through should be pursued without delay, lest they cool and slacken. *What thou doest, which must be done boldly, do it quickly.* Now she *put on her royal apparel*, that she might the better recommend herself to the king, and laid aside her fast-day clothes. She put on her fine clothes, not to please herself, but her husband; in her prayer, as we find in the Apocrypha (Esther 14:16), she thus appeals to God: *Thou knowest, Lord, I abhor the sign of my high estate which is upon my head, in the days wherein I show myself, etc.* Let those whose rank obliges them to wear rich clothes learn hence to be dead

to them, and not make them their adorning. She stood *in the inner court over against the king*, expecting her doom, between hope and fear.

**II.** The favourable reception which the king gave her. When he *saw her she obtained favour in his sight*. The apocryphal author and Josephus say that she took two maids with her, on one of whom she leaned, while the other bore up her train, — that her countenance was cheerful and very amiable, but her heart was in anguish, — that the king, lifting up his countenance that shone with majesty, at first looked very fiercely upon her, whereupon she grew pale, and fainted, and bowed herself on the head of the maid that went by her; but then God changed the spirit of the king, and, in a fear, he leaped from his throne, took her in his arms till she came to herself, and comforted her with loving words. Here we are only told,

**1.** That he protected her from the law, and assured her of safety, by *holding out to her the golden sceptre* (v. 2), which she thankfully *touched the top of*, thereby presenting herself to him as a humble petitioner. Thus having had power with God and prevailed, like Jacob, she had power with men too. *He that will lose his life for God shall save it*, or find it in a better life.

**2.** That he encouraged her address (v. 3): *What wilt thou, queen Esther, and what is thy request?* So far was he from counting her an offender that he seemed glad to see her, and desirous to oblige her. He that had divorced one wife for not coming when she was sent for would not be severe to another for coming when she was not sent for. God can turn the hearts of men, of great men, of those that act most arbitrarily, which way he pleases towards us. Esther feared that she should perish, but was promised that she should have what she might ask for, though it were *the half of the kingdom*. Note, God in his providence often prevents the fears, and outdoes the hopes, of his people, especially when they venture in his cause. Let us from this story infer, as our Saviour does from the parable of the unjust judge, an encouragement to *pray always* to our God, *and not faint*, <D1816> Luke 18:6-8. Hear what this haughty king says (*What is thy petition, and what is thy request? It shall be granted thee*), and say *shall not God hear and answer the prayers of his own elect, that cry day and night to him?* Esther came to a proud imperious man; we come to the God of love and grace. She was not called; we are: the Spirit says, *Come*, and the bride says, *Come*. She had a law against her; we have a promise, many a promise, in favour of us: *Ask, and it shall be given you*. She had no friend

to introduce her, or intercede for her, while on the contrary he that was then the king's favourite was her enemy; but we have an advocate with the Father, in whom he is well pleased. *Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace.*

**3.** That all the request she had to make to him, at this time, was that he would please to come to a banquet which she had prepared for him, and bring Haman along with him, v. 4, 5. Hereby,

**(1.)** She would intimate to him how much she valued his favour and company. Whatever she had to ask, she desired his favour above any thing, and would purchase it at any rate.

**(2.)** She would try how he stood affected to her; for, if he should refuse this, it would be to no purpose as yet to present her other request.

**(3.)** She would endeavour to bring him into a pleasant humour, and soften his spirit, that he might with the more tenderness receive the impressions of the complaint she had to make to him.

**(4.)** She would please him, by making court to Haman his favourite, and inviting him to come whose company she knew he loved and whom she desired to have present when she made her complaint; for she would say nothing of him but what she durst say to his face.

**(5.)** She hoped at the banquet of wine to have a fairer and more favourable opportunity of presenting her petition. Wisdom is profitable to direct how to manage some men that are hard to deal with, and to take them by the right handle.

**4.** That he readily came, and ordered Haman to come along with him (v. 5), which was an indication of the kindness he still retained for her; if he really designed the destruction of her and her people, he would not have accepted her banquet. There he renewed his kind enquiry (*What is thy petition?*) and his generous promise, that it should be granted, *even to the half of the kingdom* (v. 6), a proverbial expression, by which he assured her that he would deny her nothing in reason. Herod used it, <sup>4023</sup>Mark 6:23.

**5.** That then Esther thought fit to ask no more than a promise that he would please to accept of another treat, the next day, in her apartment, and Haman with him (v. 7, 8), intimating to him that then she would let him

know what her business was. This adjourning of the main petition may be attributed,

(1.) To Esther's prudence; thus she hoped yet further to win upon him and ingratiate herself with him. Perhaps her heart failed her now when she was going to make her request, and she desired to take some further time for prayer, that God would give her *a mouth and wisdom*. The putting of it off thus, it is likely, she knew would be well taken as an expression of the great reverence she had for the king, and her unwillingness to be too pressing upon him. What is hastily asked is often as hastily denied; but what is asked with a pause deserves to be considered.

(2.) To God's providence putting it into Esther's heart to delay her petition a day longer, she knew not why, but God did, that what was to happen in the night intervening between this and to-morrow might further her design and make way for her success, that Haman might arrive at the highest pitch of malice against Mordecai and might begin to *fall before him*. The Jews perhaps blamed Ester as dilatory, and some of them began to suspect her sincerity, or at least her zeal; but the event disproved their jealousy, and all was for the best.

## ~~<1718>~~ ESTHER 5:9-14

### HAMAN'S JOY AND CHAGRIN

This account here given of Haman is a comment upon that of Solomon, ~~<1721>~~ Proverbs 21:24. *Proud and haughty scorner is his name that deals in proud wrath*. Never did any man more answer that name than Haman, in whom pride and wrath had so much the ascendant. See him,

**I.** Puffed up with the honour of being invited to Esther's feast. He was *joyful and glad of heart* at it, v. 9. Observe with what a high gust he speaks of it (v. 12), how he values himself upon it, and how near he thinks it brings him to the perfection of felicity, that Esther the queen did let no man come with the king to the banquet but his mighty self, and he thought it was because she was exceedingly charmed with his conversation that the next day she had invited him also to come with the king; none so fit as he to bear the king company. Note, Self-admirers and self-flatterers are really self-deceivers. Haman pleased himself with the fancy that the queen, by this

repeated invitation, designed to honour him, whereas really she designed to accuse him, and, in calling him to the banquet, did but call him to the bar. What magnifying glasses do proud men look at their faces in! And how does the *pride of their heart deceive them!* <sup><3100B></sup>Obadiah 1:3.

**II.** Vexing and fretting at the slight that Mordecai put upon him, and thereby made uneasy to himself and to all about him.

**1.** Mordecai was as determined as ever: *He stood not up, nor moved for him*, v. 9. What he did was from a principle of conscience, and therefore he persevered in it, and would not cringe to Haman, no, not when he had reason to fear him and Esther herself complimented him. He knew God could and would deliver him and his people from the rage of Haman, without any such mean and sneaking expedients to mollify him. Those that walk in holy sincerity may walk in holy security, and go on in their work, not fearing what man can do unto them. *He that walks uprightly walks surely.*

**2.** Haman can as ill bear it as ever; nay, the higher he is lifted up, the more impatient is her of contempt and the more enraged at it.

**(1.)** It made his own spirit restless, and put him into a grievous agitation. He was *full of indignation* (v. 9) and yet *refrained himself*, v. 10. Gladly would he have drawn his sword and run Mordecai through for affronting him thus; but he hoped shortly to see him fall with all the Jews, and therefore with much ado prevailed with himself to forbear stabbing him. What a struggle had he in his own bosom between his anger, which required Mordecai's death immediately (*O that I had of his flesh! I cannot be satisfied!* <sup><89131></sup>Job 31:31), and his malice, which had determined to wait for the general massacre! Thus *thorns and snares are in the way of the froward.*

**(2.)** It made all his enjoyments sapless. This little affront which he received from Mordecai was the dead fly which spoiled all his pot of precious ointment; he himself owned in the presence of his wife and friends, to the everlasting reproach of a proud and discontented mind, that he had no comfort in his estate, preferment, and family, as long as Mordecai lived and had a place *in the king's gate*, v. 10-13. He took notice of his own riches and honours, the numerousness of his family, and the high posts to which he was advanced, that he was the darling of the prince and the idol of the court; and *yet all this avails him nothing* as long as Mordecai is unchanged.

Those that are disposed to be uneasy will never want something or other to be uneasy at; and proud men, though they have *much* to their mind, yet, if they have not *all* to their mind, it is as nothing to them. The thousandth part of what Haman had would serve to make a humble modest man as much of a happiness as he expects from this world; and yet Haman complained as passionately as if he had been sunk into the lowest degree of poverty and disgrace.

**III.** Meditating revenge, and assisted therein by his wife and his friends, v. 14. They saw how gladly he would dispense with his own resolution of deferring the slaughter till the time determined by the lot, and therefore advised him to take an earnest and foretaste of the satisfaction he then expected in the speedy execution of Mordecai; let him have that to please him at the moment; and having, as he thought, made sure the destruction of all the Jews, at the time appointed, he will not think scorn, for the present, to lay hands on Mordecai alone.

**1.** For the pleasing of his fancy they advise him to get *a gallows ready*, and have it set up before his own door, that, as soon as ever he could get the warrant signed, there might be no delay of the execution; he would not need so much as to stay the making of the gallows. This is very agreeable to Haman, who has the gallows made and fixed immediately; it must be fifty cubits high, or as near that as might be, for the greater disgrace of Mordecai and to make him a spectacle to every one that passed by; and it must be before Haman's door, that all men might take notice it was to the idol of his revenge that Mordecai was sacrificed and that he might feed his eyes with the sight.

**2.** For the gaining of his point they advise him to go early in the morning to the king, and get an order from him for the hanging of Mordecai, which, they doubted not, would be readily granted to one who was so much the king's favourite and who had so easily obtained an edict for the destruction of the whole nation of the Jews. There needed no feigned suggestion; it was enough if he let the king know that Mordecai, in contempt of the king's command, refused to reverence him. And now we leave Haman to go to bed, pleased with the thoughts of seeing Mordecai hanged the next day, and then going merrily to the banquet, and not dreaming of handselling his own gallows.