

VENGEANCE IS MINE . . .
Next Steps Devotional Guide > Esther 8:1—9:17
Sermon Series: Esther — For Such A Time As This
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1. Today we take for granted how fast we can communicate to each other. We have regular mail, texting, email, phone calls, video phone chats and etc. What has been the greatest news you have ever received and why? What has been the saddest news you have ever received and why?
2. Read Esther 8:1-2 in your Bible. Esther is queen and Mordecai is now Prime Minister. What a promotion to go from a simple judge to Prime Minister. God blesses us so that we can be a blessing to others.
 - a. Read James 1:17 and Psalms 24:1 in your sermon notes. What do these tell you about this truth?
 - b. Take your Bible and read Proverbs 3:27, Proverbs 19:17, Proverbs 22:8, and Matthew 5:42. What do these Bible verses teach you about being a blessing to others?
 - c. Question: When God brings you some unexpected blessings, do you keep it to yourself, or do you share it with others to bless them? Explain.
 - d. Why do you think you never see a U-Haul in a funeral procession?
3. Read Esther 8:3-4 in your Bible. Instead of celebrating their deliverance, Esther takes a great risk. She goes to King Xerxes without being summoned, which could literally cost her — her head.
 - a. Read Jesus' words in Luke 12:48 in your sermon notes under point #2. We are most like God when we intercede for those in peril, especially children. Who are you interceding for who is in peril? If not, why?
 - b. Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 in your sermon notes in point #2. Read the explanation for the New Testament Greek word translated as "cheerful." How can you be "hilarious" in your giving to others and the Lord?
4. Read Esther 8:5-6 in your Bible. Esther pleads with King Xerxes to correct the mistake he made in sentencing every single Jew to death in 11 months.
 - a. Persian kings were not known for admitting when they were wrong or had made a mistake. It took unbelievable and unimaginable courage to ask King Xerxes to admit that he had a mistake. Why do you think Esther was willing to take such risk and would you? Why or why not?
 - b. Read Esther 8:7 in your Bible. King Xerxes' point is: *"Queen Esther, I have done just about all I can do. I had Haman impaled to death and I have given Mordecai and you his wealth -- making the two of you the two richest people in the Persian Empire just under me. I don't know what else I can do."* Persian law stated that once an edict had been enacted, it could not be undone, cancelled or retracted. Are you at times stubborn to admit you are wrong or have made a mistake? What could you do to obey God in this stubborn struggle?
 - c. Read Esther 8:8 in your Bible. It seems King Xerxes had an after-thought. Though he could not override or retract or rescind his first edict, he could do something else. It would take some time, even by Persian Pony Express to get this second edict out in the Persian Empire. Why? The Persian Empire was about the same size as the United States.
 - i. Read Esther 8:9-10 in your Bible. Mordecai copied Haman's edict and simply rewrote it. This second edict did not override the first edict, but it certainly was a creative way to put the brakes on the first edict. Have you ever had to go back and creatively correct a mistake you made? If so, what was it? How did you do it? And what were the results?
 - ii. How do you think the Jews felt in between the first edict and the second edict? Has God ever caused you to have an after-thought about something? If so, what was it and what did you learn from it?
 - d. When it is clear to everyone that you have made a mistake, do you get defensive and defiant or do you get contrite and confessional? Explain.
 - e. In your sermon notes under point #3, read Proverbs 8:13, Proverbs 11:2 and Proverbs 16:5. What did the Lord say to you through these Proverbs?
5. Read Esther 8:11-14 in your Bible. Mordecai copied Haman's edict and simply rewrote it to say that any Jew that was attacked by a Persian, that Jew had the right to defend themselves, even kill that Persian and seize all their possessions, property and wealth. This second edict was to be implemented on the same day as the date for Haman's edict — March 7, 473 BC. This second edict did not override the first edict, but it certainly gave the Persians something to fear if they did attack any of the Jews in the Persian Empire.
 - a. The Book of Esther is the only book in the whole Bible that never mentions God. This is intentional. Ezra, the author did this to help us see that when God is absent, God is present. Providence refers to how God works behind the scenes to accomplish His will when He seems absent or silent. How is Esther 8:11-14 a demonstration of God's providence?
 - b. Standing against evil is what God and God's people do. Chuck Swindoll writes: *"Do you think it isn't worthwhile to stand against wrong laws? Do you think it is futile to stand in favor of life in the womb and against abortion? Here is a classic example of why we should boldly stand and fight to affirm truth, even though it appears existing laws will never change."*¹ Do you do this? If so, how? If you have done this, what has been the price to you personally?

¹ Charles R. Swindoll, Great Lives Series, "Esther," p. 158, Kindle.

- c. Read Esther 8:13-14 in your Bible. God loves to bring down walls (ex., the wall of Jericho in Joshua 6:1-27). This second edict did two things:
 - i. First, any Persian who hurt or harmed any Jew would face legal retaliation by that Jew or their family. The Jews were even allowed to even kill any Persian who tried or did harm them. This stopped nearly all, but not all, attacks against Jews. In America, we have the right to self-defense. Read God's promise to the Jews through Abraham in Genesis 12:3 in your Bible. Is there any connection by God between Genesis 12:3 and Esther 8:13-14? Explain.
 - ii. Second, the Jews were given permission to take any plunder of any Persian who hurt, harmed or attacked them. This including seizing that Persian's property, possessions and wealth. How was this God's providence?
- c. God loves to bring down walls in our own lives too. Right now you might be living or existing within walls of depression, or walls of a bad marriage, or the walls of an addiction or the walls of ill health or the walls of children who do not honor you or the walls of abuse or self-hatred or the walls of debt, or the walls of a false accusation. God has a way of bringing down any wall. Whatever is your "Jericho wall," God can bring it down. What is that wall for you?
- d. Read Psalms 30:5b in your sermon notes in point #4. When we are waiting on God to bring down a wall in our own lives, it is painful to wait for Him to do it. Thus, we must have hope and take heart that He will. In what ways does Psalms 30:5b encourage you? Give you hope?
6. Read Esther 8:15-17 in your Bible. Read Psalms 121:18 & 2 Corinthians 1:11. What do they say?
 - a. We are often quick to go to God with prayer concerns, which He desires and wants. Yet, when God answers them, like the Jews in Esther 8:15-17, we should thank Him. Are you quick to do this? Why or why not?
 - b. One of the things we learn from Esther 8:15-17 is that many Persians converted to Judaism — to the God of the Jews from their false idols. What a witness and a testimony. Has anyone come to Christ or returned to their walk with God because of you? Yes? No? Explain.
7. Read Esther 9:1-10 in your Bible. God never promised us if we gave our life to Christ, we would never be hurt or harmed by people. Read Jesus's words in Matthew 5:11. What did Jesus say here?
 - a. Read Esther 9:1 again in your Bible. This is the rare Hebrew word [שִׁבְּרָן, sibberu]. It refers to someone waiting with great anticipation.² In other words, many Persians were still salivating, still planning go ahead and implement attacks on the Jews as easy prey. We see this today in our own culture, where people prey on the innocent, the weak, the endearing, the handicapped, the young and etc. Have you ever personally experienced this and if so, how did God help you get through it?
 - b. Read Esther 9:2-10 again in your Bible. In just one day, the Jews killed in the capital of Persia, Susa, 500 Persians who attacked them. In addition to that, they also killed the 10 sons of Haman — thus ending the Amalekite line. Never again in the Old Testament would the Amalekites be mentioned. How is this God's providence?
 - c. Take your Bible and read 1 Samuel 15, which makes a reference to Numbers 13-14. What did God tell King Saul to do through the prophet Samuel? What did Saul do? What did God do? Do you think that Esther 9:4-10 was God's providence to 1 Samuel 15?
 - d. It is estimated that around 8,000 Christians are killed each year for their faith in Christ around the world.³ Why do you think this happens? Since it does happen, where is God's providence in all of this?
8. Read Esther 9:11-17 in your Bible. Ezra mentions 3 times in the Book of Esther (Esther 9:10, 15, 16) that even though the Jews were given legal permission to take the property, possessions and wealth, they refused to do this.⁴ Here was their chance to really strike back, but they did not. Why do you think they did not do this?
 - a. Read Romans 12:17-19 in your sermon notes in point #7. Why should we leave vengeance to the Lord?
 - b. The phrase, "*The tongue is mightier than the sword*" is based on Scripture. Read Proverbs 12:18 in your sermon notes in point #7. How is this true? When and where have you used your tongue like a sword?
 - c. Chuck Swindoll writes, "*It's at this tender point of temptation the enemy of your soul waits in the wings, ready to encourage you to proceed and not hold back. With very persuasive suggestions he hopes to convince you, you've taken it long enough. You've graciously and unselfishly held back and gone the second (and third and fourth and fifth . . .) mile until you've about run out of miles and patience. And so, 'Why not get back?' he whispers.*"⁵ Have you decided to get even rather than just get mad? What happened?
 - d. Read Jesus' words in Luke 23:34 in your sermon notes in point #7. Someone once said, "*Holding on to a grudge, holding on to anger, holding on to resentment, and holding on to vengeance is like drinking poison hoping the other person dies.*" What do you think about this and why?
 - e. You have a choice when hurt; you can get better or stay bitter; you can rejoice or stay resentful; you can give people grace or hold on to a grudge. What do you do when hurt?
 - f. Read Jesus' words in John 14:27. No one can give you peace — not even yourself. Only Jesus Christ can. Where do you need peace this Advent/Christmas season and what are you willing to do out of love and obedience to Jesus for Him to give it to you?

² A. Boyd Luter and Barry C. Davis, God Behind the Seen: Expositions of the Books of Ruth and Esther, p. 323.

³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-24864587>.

⁴ Karen H. Jobes, The NIV Application Commentary: Esther, p. 196.

⁵ Charles R. Swindoll, Great Lives Series, "Esther," Kindle Edition, p. 183.