

Symphony Devotional Esther 5

Hello, everyone! Today's devotional will be from Esther chapter 5. Just as a quick refresher of the last chapter, we left off of Esther chapter 4 where Esther and Mordecai were desperately thinking of how to deal with this royal decree from the king which was to annihilate all of the Jews. And the decision they come down to is for Esther to approach the king. It is an extremely risky and fearful thing to approach the king when not directly summoned by him, an act that's punishable by death. But Esther, in her bravery and trust in God, decides to do so. So she's going to approach the king to see if he is willing to accept her presence and listen to her. And just as a side note, back in those days, if someone approached the king without his summoning, but the king held out his golden scepter or staff towards them, it was a symbol of the king's acceptance of this person's presence. So this is where we left off, and let me read chapter 5 for us:

5 On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, in front of the king's quarters, while the king was sitting on his royal throne inside the throne room opposite the entrance to the palace. ² And when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, she won favor in his sight, and he held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. Then Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter. ³ And the king said to her, "What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given you, even to the half of my kingdom." ⁴ And Esther said, "If it please the king,^[a] let the king and Haman come today to a feast that I have prepared for the king." ⁵ Then the king said, "Bring Haman quickly, so that we may do as Esther has asked." So the king and Haman came to the feast that Esther had prepared. ⁶ And as they were drinking wine after the feast, the king said to Esther, "What is your wish? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled."^[b] ⁷ Then Esther answered, "My wish and my request is: ⁸ If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it please the king^[c] to grant my wish and fulfill my request, let the king and Haman come to the feast that I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said."

⁹ And Haman went out that day joyful and glad of heart. But when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he neither rose nor trembled before him, he was filled

with wrath against Mordecai. ¹⁰ Nevertheless, Haman restrained himself and went home, and he sent and brought his friends and his wife Zeresh. ¹¹ And Haman recounted to them the splendor of his riches, the number of his sons, all the promotions with which the king had honored him, and how he had advanced him above the officials and the servants of the king. ¹² Then Haman said, “Even Queen Esther let no one but me come with the king to the feast she prepared. And tomorrow also I am invited by her together with the king. ¹³ Yet all this is worth nothing to me, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.” ¹⁴ Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, “Let a gallows^[d] fifty cubits^[e] high be made, and in the morning tell the king to have Mordecai hanged upon it. Then go joyfully with the king to the feast.” This idea pleased Haman, and he had the gallows made.

In this passage, we see that God has everything under control. In the first half of this chapter, we see this in how King Ahasuerus reacts to Esther positively. Just imagine how scary that must've been: you do the illegal act of approaching the king without his permission; he has all the power to kill you if he so desires; he just put out a decree to kill all of your people; and King Ahasuerus in particular didn't have a particularly good track record of being patient with his past queens. Yet through God's grace and power, the king looks at Esther favorably. God's sovereignty is clearly at play here and Esther was faithful to follow through in her courage. But even with this green light to tell the king what she wanted to tell him, it seems that Esther held it off for just a little bit longer. In verse 8 Esther says: “let the king and Haman come to the feast that I will prepare for them, and *tomorrow* I will do as the king has said.” I'm not entirely sure whether this was Esther in the moment of tension getting cold feet, but what I think happened here was that God intervened and moved Esther to not talk yet, as this wasn't the exact timing that God had desired. So, in this, we see even more how much God was in control.

In the second half of this chapter, we hear about Haman, who (we know from past chapters) is kind of the king's advisor who crafted the idea of the decree to kill the Jewish people. Haman is leaving very happy and prideful because he found favor with the king and even got exclusively invited to two banquets held by Queen Esther. However, he's ridden with hatred as he sees Mordecai who doesn't show him the praise and fear he craves, and Haman desires to have

Mordecai killed. But what stood out to me was verse 10, which says: “Nevertheless, Haman restrained himself and went home...” Now, it could be possible that Haman did this of his own accord, but I think this also was God preventing Haman from acting in that moment. We’ll see as we continue to read Esther what happens to Haman and Mordecai, but even now, it’s evident that God has everything in His hands, from the king’s reactions, to Esther’s obedience, and even Haman’s restrain.

Today, let’s remember this fact: that God has, is, and will always be in control. From the very first man, to Abraham, to Moses, today’s passage in Esther, all the way to today, in our lives, in our relationships, in our struggles—God is sovereign over all of these things, even in our mistakes. Not to say that God endorses when we mess up, but that even in our brokenness, even through the evil we see in our world, God is still God; let’s be comforted because He can use and redeem any and all situations. Let’s trust Him, because He is God, He is in control, and He definitely, without a doubt, knows what He is doing.