May the LORD make His face to shine upon you!

As we continue along this bumpy, twisting, sometimes miserable road called life, keep in mind our salvation through Jesus Christ. This is so important. If we have prayed to Jesus, confessing that we are far too evil to get into heaven by ourselves; if we have repented of our sins, which means that we do our best to turn away from them; if we believe in Jesus Christ, knowing that He is the only way to be saved and believe that His death on the cross took our place for the punishment we deserve; then we have salvation.

When we have salvation, in spite of what happens to us here, we can be assured that our God loves us more than we can begin to imagine. And He is all-powerful. Once we are in His hands, no-one can take us from Him. Whatever happens in this short life, we can know without doubt, that our eternity will be without tears.

Take joy in the good things God has given us now and with perseverance go through the evil that happens in this fallen world. God reigns; nothing happens that He doesn’t allow; and all of it is for His glory and for the benefit of His children.

*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*

Romans 8:18

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6-14-20

Esther 5

Esther had made a choice. She chose to act on God’s providence, which had made her queen of the Persian Empire. She chose to follow God, regardless of the cost. She said, “*And thus I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish*.” This was not a statement of simply giving one’s life over to fate nor was it despair. This was Esther consciously choosing to be used by God for His glory; and if that meant giving her life, then she was willing to do so.

Christians are called to nothing less. Throughout the history of the church, there have been many thousands of martyrs, and there will be many thousands more. Each of us who are called as followers of Christ must be willing to give up our lives if it means His glory. Currently, for those of us who live in this country, martyrdom is unlikely. We might think that it is easy to say we would die for Jesus since the odds are against us ever having to do so. But we must remember what all is involved in making a statement like that.

If we are willing to die for Christ, then we will live for Him now. This is, in effect, dying for Jesus because we are sacrificing what we want to do in order to work for Him. There is a balance here. There are a number of things that we must do in order to live in this world. We must earn money so that we can provide for ourselves and our families. We are to care for our families. We have to take care of ourselves so that we are healthy; our bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit. And we can have rest and enjoyment. God created many things for us to enjoy in this life and He was insistent that we have rest. But we can never let any of these things come before God, and we must make an effort to see what work He has for us and do it; even at the expense of these other things.

Esther took the necessary time to pray before carrying out her duty. This ought to be a constant in the Christian life. Prayer should come before any decision, especially big ones. Allow time for the Holy Spirit to give you guidance and leading. He can bring things to your mind that you may not have thought of. Keep Proverbs 16:3 in mind. *Commit your works to the Lord And your plans will be established*. This doesn’t mean that things will always work out the way you want, but they will work out for the best. Esther had time to plan; and when the time came, she put her plan into action. In doing good works, we are to plan and act and leave the outcome to God.

Even though Esther was commencing a great and brave plan, she acted with care and decorum. Instead of barging into the room, she merely stepped into the doorway and waited for the king. When king Ahasuerus noticed that she was there, he was once again smitten by her beauty, regal bearing, and humility. Christians may or may not be beautiful, but we can have a regal bearing. We are subjects and servants of almighty God; we are a royal priesthood. We do not wear it in pride, but humility. This is what should set us apart: We are not fearful or beneath any other, yet we submit ourselves to Godly service on behalf of all. As Christ came to the earth in humility, we are to live the same.

King Ahasuerus was pleased when he saw his queen and he extended his golden scepter. Again, Esther followed protocol. Instead of trying to exert her authority as queen, she quietly approached the king, touched the scepter, and waited for him to speak. Esther’s life has been spared so far, but she has a way to go. She has a plan and continues forward depending on God to see her through. Remember that she has been married to this man now for five years. Even though she may not spend a lot of time with him, she has gotten to know him and how to deal with him.

King Ahasuerus lets Esther know that he would be pleased to provide whatever would make her happy. So, she asks him to come to a banquet that she has already prepared for him. Certainly, Esther knows what this man likes: food, wine, and women. She also requests that Haman join them. King Ahasuerus has had banquets; we have already read of one he had for his officials that lasted 180 days; immediately followed by another that lasted seven days. We read of the wedding banquet for Esther. But these are feasts that the king himself brought about. Esther has made a banquet specially to honor him. He immediately accepts and gives a command for Haman to be brought. Notice that the man who is second in the kingdom, has just come under the wishes of Esther.

The king is quite happy with the feast that has been prepared in his honor. After eating, they are enjoying wine. Ahasuerus turns his attention back to Esther. He knows very well that she did not risk her life to simply invite him to a meal. It seems that this would be the perfect time for Esther to bring up the problem that Haman had caused: but she does not. Instead, she invites the king and Haman to another feast the next day, after which, she promises to explain what is on her mind.

There really is no good explanation as to why Esther did this. But for some reason, this had become part of her plan. Again, we see the providence of God. God had led her in making plans and He had something else He wanted done; it was done during this delay. In the next chapter, we will see what God wanted done along with more of His awe-inspiring providence.

Haman left the banquet on cloud nine. He had just received another honor, which was the most important thing to him. His euphoria lasted only for a moment. He noticed Mordecai. Regardless of all that had happened, Mordecai stood his ground in refusing to bow before Hamon and worship him. Haman was immediately filled with rage. This was not just a little miffed or put out; this was murderous wrath directed at another man. Again, we see the true Haman; in his position there was no reason to even care what Mordecai thought or did. Yet his pride was such that any affront to it caused him to have a completely unreasonable reaction. Such complete unreason is a sure sign of satan.

Contentedness in life is a blessing from God. Paul tells us in Philippians 4:11-13, “*Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me*.”

From what Paul writes, we see that there is a human element and a divine element to contentedness. Twice, Paul uses the word “learned”. Paul chose to be content and he practiced doing so. But we also see that he was only able to accomplish this through Christ who gave him the strength.

It can be so difficult for us to be content. The world is constantly pushing the desire for more into our faces. Advertisements, television shows, movies, and articles all work on us to make us want more and more. They are very good at convincing us that we need all sorts of things to be happy. The world pushes us to want more products, more money, power, success; more of everything. The result is that we are never happy or satisfied because we never have enough. When we get one thing, there is something else we don’t have. This is displayed in Haman who has far more than enough, yet is completely miserable because of one truly insignificant thing. How often do people make their lives miserable because they refuse to look at what blessings they have and instead focus on what they don’t have.

A Christian, of all people, needs to be content. We are saved. We will never suffer the pains of hell. We will spend our eternity happier than the happiest moment of our earthly lives. We will be in the presence of Jesus. We have been forgiven our sins, in spite of the evil that lives in our hearts. Our God loves us enough to die for us. From that perspective, who cares what we have or don’t have on earth? But even more, our God is kind and we do have provision in this life. God provides for our needs; He will give us whatever we ask that is in compliance with His will.

What we have to do is first decide to be content. This cannot be accomplished outside of Christ or outside of His strength. We focus on the good that we do have, and in prayer, present to Christ our desires, patiently waiting on Him to fulfill them. If He sees fit to provide them, we can praise Him with thanksgiving. If He does not see fit to provide, we praise Him for His wisdom in withholding what would be harmful to us. This is a continuing process for us; a part of sanctification.

All this does not mean that we must never desire something. As long as it is not contrary to God, we can work toward gaining things that are pleasing to us. God has no problem providing good things for His children. It is just that these desires must never push God out of first place in our lives. God wants to be first and He deserves to be first. Anything we place above Him has become an idol.

Haman had his idols of wealth and power and honor; and they consumed him. He could not be content; he would never be content. Look what Haman had to do; he had to call his friends together along with his wife. They didn’t come because they wanted to. And we can see why. Haman gathers them together and tells them all about himself. We can be sure that they’ve heard this all before. Can you imagine sitting there listening to this guy? These are not true friends; they only hang around Haman out of fear or for what they can get. A true friend would have knocked him off his high horse.

Haman lists what means the most to him. First comes the glory of his riches. Notice that it’s not just the riches, it’s the glory of them. The power that his riches bring. Next, he brags about all his sons. It is fine for a father to be proud of his children, but Haman is obviously taking all the credit, as if his wife, Zeresh, had nothing to do with it. He is impressed with himself that he has been promoted to second only to the king; and now he has found favor with Esther. Yet, after all this boasting, he whines that Mordecai the Jew will not bow down to him. This is pathetic, but how useful this kind of person is to satan.

Perhaps in an attempt to get him to stop whining, Zeresh and Haman’s friends make a suggestion. Have Mordecai impaled on a stake 75 feet in the air. This seemed good to Haman. By this he could worship one more idol, the idol of revenge.

Yahweh does not tolerate idolatry. He relates it to the same crime of adultery in a marriage. Our loving God will accept someone who repents of the sin of idolatry in the name of Jesus; but that is the only way. If a person persists in their sin, they will have to pay the consequences, just as Haman will.

Prayer

Lord God, there is so much to learn in Your word. Peace and contentment are ready for us if we will just work for it in the strength of Jesus. We also realize that the very desire to be content comes from Your Holy Spirit. We owe You everything.

There are so many idols in this world. Some of them are even good things that You have created for our benefit, but we put them ahead of You. Strengthen us once more by Your Holy Spirit so that we can avoid idolatry. It is our desire, as those saved by Jesus Christ, to worship You alone, O Lord, and let nothing take Your place in our lives.

Help us to surrender our wills to You, that our lives may be truly full; that we have the fullness of Christ. Work in the hearts of Your people the desire to bring You glory in all that we say and do. The desire must come from You, our wills are not strong enough and tend toward corruption. Sanctify us, that we may become more and more like our blessed Saviour, Your Son and our Lord, Jesus the Christ.

We pray these things in His holy name

Amen