With prayers for God’s mercy and care in your life.

While we live in this world with all its troubles and cares, it is easy to feel depressed by the crushing load we sometimes have to bear. That is why Jesus invites us to take His yoke upon our shoulders. His yoke is light because He is the one who is helping us to carry it. Our strength comes from Him instead of ourselves.

We are called to bravery. We are called to perseverance. We must also realize that we have good things in this life; good things given by God through Jesus Christ. But we keep our focus on Jesus and on eternity. His Kingdom is coming in full view upon this earth, He has made the way for us. We just need to cling to Him and not let go.

*These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world*.

John 16:33

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Esther 6

Haman had gone to bed that night after having had a gallows made that was 75 feet high. His plan was to have Mordecai impaled on it the next morning. After which, it was his plan to go and have a private feast with king Ahasuerus and queen Esther. He went to bed a happy man. It seems odd to us that such a perverted sequence of events could make someone happy. But this is the result of the fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden.

One could say that this chapter 6 is full of coincidences; but we know better. These happenings are the providence of God. God has a plan that He is working, and it will come to pass; often in spite of and even because of sinful actions on the part of evil people. This demonstrates the awesomeness and power of God. How He does this is beyond our understanding. People do make their own decisions and are entirely responsible for their actions. God does know what everyone is going to do and has known since before creation. But God also has His hand in the events of this world; He did not simply start things rolling and then let things go. He is very active in His creation, seeing to it that His plan is in motion and that His people are cared for. Again, for us, this is a mystery.

The first thing we see God bring about is that king Ahasuerus can’t sleep. We could spend lots of time guessing at reasons for this, but when it comes down to it, we don’t know. We just know that the king couldn’t sleep and that this was a critical part of God’s plan.

The king decides that he would like to have a book of records, the chronicles, brought to him and read to him. This would simply be a book that recorded what took place in the court from day to day. He could have had a more interesting book brought to him; he could have sent for one of his concubines; but king Ahasuerus called for a writing that recorded day to day life in his court.

Again, we would have to guess why. My guess is that he wanted something boring to put him to sleep. Many years ago, I purchased the huge three-volume set entitled “The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire” by Edward Gibbon. It was published between 1776 and 1778 and contained the history of the Roman Empire from the second century AD through the fall of Constantinople in 1453. My high school aged son took one of the volumes into his room with him to read. I was quite proud of him for taking on such a book; until I learned that he would read it at night so that he could fall asleep. I must confess that I never finished the entire series, so perhaps it had the same effect on me.

In any event, the volume that the king’s attendants brought and read to him involved an incident that had taken place about five years before: It was, of course, the account of Mordecai revealing an assassination plan against the king. The account of that is told in chapter 2 of Esther. When we read that section, we noted that Mordecai had not been honored for his action. This would not have been due to arrogance on the part of the king, in fact, this would have reflected badly on him in this honor culture. Again, God acts, that things may be brought about in His timing.

This brings us to something to think about. Have you ever done something for someone and they don’t even thank you? Have you put lots of time and effort into helping someone, and they move on like nothing ever happened? Have you ever done something nice for someone else and they falsely accuse you of having other motives? It has happened to all of us. Perhaps we have even been guilty of this ourselves. It’s not a good feeling to be unappreciated. Our natural reaction is often anger coupled with resolving to never help that person again.

That is the natural reaction that any of us will feel, but here is where the Christian is called to something higher. We are to take our eyes off ourselves and focus them on Christ and His glory. Our ultimate purpose in doing good is to love our neighbor and thus, honor God. We do good things because it is the right thing to do. We do right because it is pleasing to our Lord and Saviour. If we get a ‘thank you’, that’s great. Saying thank you is the right thing for someone to do. But if we don’t get one, we still move along knowing that Jesus is pleased and that is the reason we do good in the first place.

When it comes right down to it, if we get upset for not receiving a ‘thank you’, it shows that we are expecting something in return, even if it’s just recognition. This is another problem with the fallen human heart; it is selfish. We tend to want glory for ourselves and so we do things for others to get that glory. That is why people’s good works are as filthy rags before God; our good works are tainted with selfish motives. None of this is to say that we should be doormats or allow ourselves to be abused by others. We must simply keep in mind that our good works are to be for Christ, and because of His righteousness being applied to us, our works become acceptable to God.

We don’t know how exactly Mordecai felt about not being recognized for saving the king’s life. But it appears that he went back to sitting at the king’s gate, carrying on business, and keeping up with what Esther was doing. We don’t read about him complaining like Hamon did because Mordecai wouldn’t bow in his presence. But things are changing; in God’s timing.

Upon hearing that nothing had been done to honor Mordecai, this became a priority for the king. Once more, we see his need to ask for someone else to come up with a solution to the problem; he seems to have trouble coming up with solutions himself. He asks who is in his court. In God’s providence, Haman has just come into the court, eager to ask the king to have Mordecai impaled. It would be easy for him to get this permission since Mordecai was in direct violation of an order by the king: that all were to bow before Haman.

When Haman is ushered in, the king asks his question. The way the question was phrased was so important. He didn’t ask the direct question, “How should I honor Mordecai?” Had he done so, Haman may have been able to work around to Mordecai’s disobedience and still have him impaled. As it was, Ahasuerus asked, “*What is to be done for the man whom the king desires to honor*?” This was perfect; Haman’s swelled head immediately assumed that he was the one to be honored, so he came up with a reward that bordered on being declared royalty.

This is perhaps the most comic turn of events in the whole Bible. It is also tragic, but none of us likes Haman anyway. The Bible is very clear regarding how God feels about pride. This account of Esther is a vivid demonstration of what He can do about it. In Proverbs 8:13 we are told, “*The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverted mouth, I hate*.” From this we see that Haman is on the wrong path entirely. He has no fear of God and he does all the things that God hates. In Proverbs 16:18 it says, “*Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling*.” God can and will deal with pride. In today’s Scripture, Haman is stumbling. He is being humbled by God and in front of everybody. We know that his destruction is coming.

God will humble anyone. If the person is an unbeliever, they will simply be humbled because that’s what Scripture says will happen to them. It also happens in the hope that they will see the error of their ways and turn to God through Jesus Christ. If a believer becomes prideful, God will humble them out of love for them. It is still a painful experience, but it will be for our own good. Pride is a sin; it does not belong in the Christian life.

In 1 Corinthians 4:7, Paul reminds us of something very important. “*What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it*?” Every good thing we have is a gift from God. Any physical advantage, any skill or special ability we have, has been received from God. Even if we have something that we have worked very hard for, God is the One who gave us the ability and perseverance to achieve what we have. Isaiah 44:2 says, “*Thus says the Lord who made you and formed you from the womb*”.God had His hand in our formation, we are not simply random genetic combinations. Just as God fashioned Adam, He has fashioned each of us. Therefore, we have no reason for pride since we have been given everything we have.

In the reward that Haman concocted, it is also made clear how shallow he really is. He could have mentioned treasure or land, something that could have at least been profitable and been of service throughout life. But no; he was focused on a fleeting moment of glory. He sought being in the limelight for a short time; after which, it would all be over. This is nothing less than pathetic. Yet how often do we try to achieve glory in this lifetime at the expense of eternity. In the face of eternity, our lifetime is shorter than the few moments of being led around on a horse in the public square. We must learn to think in terms of forever. Be sure to invest in eternity, which is done by being true and active followers and disciples of Jesus Christ.

We can only imagine what must have been going on in the minds of Haman and Mordecai as he was being led around on the horse and Haman pronounced Mordecai’s high honor. Especially in front of all the people who knew how they felt about each other. It was obviously a time of intense shame and pain for Haman. The important thing to notice is how the two men reacted differently to honor given to them.

Earlier, Haman had the perceived honor of being invited to Esther’s banquet. He went home and gathered his friends and wife and told them all about it so that they would know he had been so honored. We are told here that after receiving honor, “*Mordecai returned to the king’s gate*.” What a difference! Mordecai didn’t let things go to his head; he just went back to doing what he always did. Another lesson for us: sometimes we get congratulated, sometimes we get a pat on the back. There is nothing wrong with this. We just need to accept it gratefully, understand that we were able to do something good by the grace of God, and go back to life. It must not change us; we can’t become prideful. If we do, it will lead to a downfall.

Haman once more hurries home, but this time so terribly embarrassed that he covers his head. He gathers his friends and wife and tells them about his misery. Haman’s comforters then make a startling prediction, “*If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish origin, you will not overcome him, but will surely fall before him*.” Apparently, this group is somehow aware of the promise God made to Abram in Genesis 12:3, “*And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse*.” It is interesting that this didn’t come up earlier when they were giving Haman advice in dealing with Mordecai. How often people ignore God until it gets to the point where they can’t.

Haman is then whisked away by the king’s eunuchs. This would have been an official escort to bring Haman ceremoniously to the banquet. Whether or not he realizes it, Haman has lost control of everything. Of course, he never really had control. He is now caught in the tide of God’s providence, heading toward the fulfilling of God’s plan. We have to wonder about how Haman’s mind was reeling from all these events; and, he is about to find out that queen Esther, the wife of the king, is one of the people he has condemned to death.

There is something that we shouldn’t miss in the action of Haman giving honor to Mordecai; giving honor to a man he hated and wanted to kill. Paul tells us in Philippians 2:9-11, “*For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*.” There are many who hate Jesus and will do anything to deny Him or fight against Him. All those who refuse to turn to Christ, are denying Him and rebelling against Him. The day will come when all these will give Him honor. They will do so publicly, in front of all creation. And they will do so immediately before their destruction.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, how wonderful the work You have done for us on that cross. We gladly bow before You and proclaim You King of all. Thank You for calling us and thank You for the gift of faith, that we are not among those who honor You because they are suddenly faced with the overwhelming fact that You are Lord.

Jesus, we know that pride lurks deep within our hearts. We also know that it is displeasing to You and that we have no reason for pride. May Your Holy Spirit always remind us to keep pride from rising up; gratefully remembering that You have provided us with all we have. And if we do fall into pride, please humble us Lord. It will be painful but it will be done in love and for our own good.

We praise You glorious God, creator of all things good. You are our fortress and strong tower; You are the protection we must have against the accuser. How good it is to be in Your gentle and mighty hands.

We pray these things in the name of Jesus our Lord

Amen