May the Holy Spirit dwell richly in your lives!

As each of us continues to deal with our own issues and problems, we continue to see problems in the world and in our society. It seems things keep getting worse. What we are seeing is the result of a society that has turned away from God.

This is no time for the Christian to stand aside and do nothing. It is obvious that the things that are happening are beyond us; we can’t fix them. But we have direct access to the One who does have control. This is the action that the Christian is called to: Prayer.

We look to Jesus. He did not start demonstrations or petitions. He did not go after the civil government. Jesus prayed and Jesus proclaimed the Gospel to those He came in contact with. As disciples of Jesus, we are called to the same.

Prayer is powerful. Heaven is attentive to prayer. Prayer is as incense before the Lord. Satan would make it seem as if our prayers are simply going off into space and reaching no-one. The Bible tells us differently. As Christians, we must believe the word of God.

*Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.*

 James 5:16

In Christ’s love

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Esther 4

When last we left the story of Esther, Haman had managed to put into motion a plan to annihilate the entire Jewish population of the Persian Empire. His reason for this action was simply that Mordecai had refused to bow to him or pay him homage. This is nothing less than satanic activity. Haman is only a man, but he is driven by satan. Satan wanted to see the Israelite nation destroyed; he knew that this is where the Messiah would come from. And the Messiah would be his own destruction.

Driven by satan or not, we can see here the depths of evil the unrestrained human heart is capable of. The Christian is restrained from evil by the indwelling Holy Spirit. That doesn’t mean we don’t sin; our flesh is still inclined that way. But we are better able to resist evil because our reborn spirit doesn’t really want to sin. It is aligned with God. This leads to a constant battle between our spirit and our flesh. So, if a constant battle takes place in your life between wanting to do right and wanting to do wrong, be encouraged. This is the life of a Christian.

Those who are not Christian are often still good and decent people. This is the common grace of God. Common grace is not saving grace. Common grace is God providing for His creation in general. Part of this is a God given conscience. We know right from wrong, and for the most part, people will behave appropriately in society.

But there are those who will consistently go against their conscience to the point that it no longer operates. Nothing is beyond them and they are concerned only with themselves. This is the point where Haman was. Someone like this is a tool for satan, and he will use whatever tools he can to go against anything that has to do with God’s kingdom.

We don’t have to look far to find examples of these kind of people today. It is obvious that the amount of evil in the world is increasing. It is so easy for us to become angry with the people involved; we can see them and what they are doing. But we who are Christians must keep in mind Ephesians 6:12.

*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

These people are also responsible for what they do, so I’m not saying to simply let people get by with evil. But most of our fighting must be done on our knees. The things happening in our would today are beyond fixing by any person or group. We must turn to the One who can change the world. And it is still our job to spread the Gospel. Hebrews 4:12.

*For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

When we share the Gospel, it is the word of God. God’s word can reach into the hardest heart; it can break through the thickest wall of sin; it can overpower even the most wicked. We need to stay in the word of God ourselves. It is how we cling to Christ while the world and so many in it follow the devil and do his works. We must not be like king Ahasuerus and Haman who sat and drank wine while the kingdom fell into confusion. We have the answer and we must share it.

Because Mordecai sat at the city gates, he was able to hear the whole story behind what was going on with the edict to destroy the Jews. When he heard these things, he mourned openly and loudly. This decree of death to his nation had to hurt, but there must have been the additional weight on his mind that he was the start of this. If only he had bowed to Haman, this wouldn’t be happening.

If we reflect on this a little, we know that satan is always looking for an opportunity. With a man like Haman in charge it was only a matter of time before satan would find some excuse for him to become angry with the Jews. The other thing is that Mordecai did the right thing. He refused homage to a people and a man who were enemies of God. Sometimes, doing the right thing makes life better; sometimes doing the right thing brings about problems. In this case, it brought about a tremendous problem.

There come times in our own lives when doing the right thing gets us into trouble. We are called to do the right thing anyway. In the early centuries after Jesus, a father and mother who turned to Christ and refused to offer incense to Caesar could get their whole families thrown to the lions. But professing Christ is the right thing to do. Today, the chances are slim that we’ll be thrown to the lions; but how often do we keep our mouths shut about Jesus, just to save some awkwardness?

We learn how far Esther is removed from the world. She is basically a prisoner in the palace. She was certainly treated very well and had lots of nice things and comforts. But she didn’t even know about policies her husband was making. In these times, the king’s wife and concubines were surrounded only by other women and eunuchs; the king’s women weren’t allowed the freedom to move about the city where there were other functioning males. Mordecai’s wailing was truly a deep lament, but it also got the attention of some of Esther’s people who brought word to her; this led to a series of messages between them by her servants.

The first thing she tried was to send him some clothes. It wasn’t good to have her cousin and father figure behaving in this fashion. It may have been embarrassing to her, but at the same time we are told that she “*writhed in great anguish*”. She cared deeply for Mordecai and wanted to comfort him.

Of course, Mordecai would not accept the clothes, so she sent a trusted eunuch named Hathach to find out what was going on and why. Mordecai explained everything; from him not bowing down to Haman, to the edict, to the bribe Haman offered, and even had a copy of the decree for Esther to read. Mordecai instructed his charge to go to the king and plead for their people. He let her know that this was the time to revel her heritage.

This wasn’t as simple as it sounds. It seems that after five years, king Ahasuerus may have lost some interest in his queen. She hadn’t even seen him in a month. Furthermore, you didn’t just go wondering into the king’s throne room. Just the act of coming into the presence of the king uninvited was a capital offence; even for the queen. If the king happened to be in a good mood, he may extend his scepter, in which case you would be spared.

All of this was sprung on Esther very quickly. She hadn’t had time to absorb everything or think about it very much. We cannot blame her for not wanting to risk her life going before the king uninvited. Mordecai had had time to think. In his wisdom, he had some glimmerings of what would happen and what might happen. He let Esther know that it was up to her to act. We can see his knowledge of God here in how he sees things working out.

First off, he reminds her that just because she is the queen is no grounds for immunity. Eventually her nationality will become known and when it does, her fate will be the same as the rest of the Jews. The laws of the Persians were irrevocable and even though she was the queen, she was subject to it; additionally, even the king couldn’t spare her from the law.

Even if she could hide from the law, she wouldn’t be able to hide from God. There are cases in the Pentateuch where disobedience to God brought about the end of a household family line. For her to stand by while her people were destroyed would have been a great sin.

Mordecai is aware that God’s promise to Abraham’s children is irrevocable. God will not permit His chosen people to perish. In spite of someone’s disobedience, God’s plan will come to pass. Finally, Mordecai has her consider how she got there; How unlikely it was that of all people, she became the queen of Persia. He tells her, “*Who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this*?” She must consider God’s providence; this could be the reason she was there.

We can learn something from the way Mordecai says this. He starts off with “*who knows?*” What a question. That is really a question we are all faced with every day. Who knows; why we have the job we do; why we go to the school we do; why we meet the people we do; why we have the skills we do; who knows? God does; He puts us where He wants us; in contact with those He wants us in contact with.

This is kind of the frustrating part. It is usually up to us to try to act in the right way at the proper time. All of us would like to have God appear before us in a burning bush and tell us exactly what He wants us to do. Not gonna happen. Mordecai looked at what was going on and thought maybe this was why Esther was there. It was not a random guess, but taking everything into consideration, it seemed like a good guess. This is what we must do. We were put on this earth to do certain work and we must do our best to figure out what it is and do it. Notice that if Mordecai was wrong, it may have cost Esther her head. And ultimately, Esther had to decide. Our decisions probably won’t have those consequences, but we must forge ahead in accordance with prayer and Scripture.

Esther makes her choice and begins to act like a queen. She gives a command to Mordecai and she gives a command to all her Jewish subjects. She will join them in the fasting like a true leader. Once they obey her commands, she will go into the king knowing full well it might be the last thing she does. But once again, she is being queen of her people. Even though Mordecai was older than Esther, even though he had raised her from childhood, he obeyed his queen.

It is again so very strange here that we don’t see anything about God or about prayer. The people are simply to fast on behalf of Esther. Surely, we can presume that prayer accompanies the fasting.

Once more we have application for our lives. At this point in the story, Esther was the only one who could actually attempt to do something. None of the rest of the Jews could even get near the king. It would have been easy for them to do nothing. Sometimes we look at a situation and realize that there is nothing we can do. It is completely beyond us. We need to intercede and pray for the ones who can do something. If we don’t know of anyone, pray that someone will be able to do something. We are not excused from the action of prayer. It is part of the way God works and doing so is being obedient to Him.

Do you see Jesus here? King Ahasuerus made an irrevocable decree; that all the Jews must die. Mordecai came under that decree and could do nothing himself, so he sought a mediator. He found a mediator who was willing to take the chance of dying in order to save him from death. Yahweh has issued an irrevocable decree; all that sin must die; physical death; spiritual death; eternal death. All of us fall under that decree and we are incapable of saving ourselves from it. We needed a mediator and God provided Jesus who was willing to die for us; and did.

How blessed we are that God is not the foolish tyrant that Ahasuerus was. The decree that God made was entirely just. He is holy and all that sin against Him deserve eternal death and suffering. But He is also merciful and was willing to give up His only begotten Son to take the punishment in our place. All we have to do is believe on Jesus for salvation. Now, a lot comes with that, because true belief goes very deep. But the Bible makes clear that salvation from death comes only through belief in Jesus.

Prayer

LORD God, we praise You for You have made a way to save us from Your own decree. The cost was great to You and You paid the price in full. We have nothing left but to accept Your gracious gift and offer our lives to You as Your servants.

Thank You for this account of the life of Esther. In all Your word, You provide knowledge for us. You have recorded all these things that we might learn how to live our lives. We get to learn from the triumphs and the mistakes of others.

As we live this life, we ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we make decisions about our works for You. Help us to see clearly; give us example from Your Scripture; remind us to seek You in everything we do. We know that You have ordained works for us to do, help us, Lord, to recognize these works and give us the courage to perform them. We need You in all these things.

We pray in Jesus’ name

Amen