

Session 5

May 20, 2018

STAND UP AND SPEAK

Esther 7:1-10

By God's "providence," we mean that God is actively directing His creation (and all that is in it) to accomplish His ultimate purpose. So when we talk about God "moving" in a situation, we are acknowledging that God is at work in that situation to accomplish His will. As the colorful commentator J. Vernon McGee once stated, "Providence means that the hand of God is in the glove of human events."

The entire story of Esther demonstrates God's providence as He puts all the pieces in place and then uses them to vanquish His enemies, save His people, and glorify Himself. In this text, each person plays a part, but it is God who makes it all happen.

God's providence and the king's promise (vv. 1-2). God's providence can be seen clearly in the life of this pagan king. Everything from the contempt King Ahasuerus felt toward Vashti his queen that created a vacancy in the king's household (1:12); to the beauty of Esther that caught his eye (2:17); to the recording of Mordecai's intervention in the plot against the king (2:23); to the king's welcome of Esther in the palace courtyard (5:2); to the promise King Ahasuerus made to honor Esther's request (5:3; 7:2); all of it demonstrates God's control, even over the lost to assure the fulfillment of His plan. Where we see the incredible, God sees the intentional. What we call coincidence, God calls part of His plan.

God's providence and the queen's boldness (vv. 3-6). Back in chapter 4, Mordecai got Esther thinking with his suggestion, "Who knows, perhaps you have come to your royal position for such a time as this" (4:13). Now the time had come to act. While God put the provisions in place, it was up to Esther to do her part. Three key ingredients are evident in Esther's plea. First, the queen was *passionate*. The lives of her people were at stake. The worst thing the king could have done was to deny her request, so it made sense to lay it on the line. "For my people and I have been sold out to destruction, death, and extermination." Not only was her plea passionate, but it was *humble*. "If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept silent," she said. "Indeed, the trouble wouldn't be worth burdening the king." This perfect mix of sincerity and humility moved the king to respond. His demand to know who was behind the evil scheme allowed Esther to add *boldness* to her mix. With so much at stake, the queen turned a fierce gaze toward their honored guest, stretched out a pointed finger and declared, "The adversary and enemy is this evil Haman."

God's providence and Haman's destruction (vv. 6-10). Regarding the corrupt who rule with injustice, the psalmist declared, the Lord "will pay them back for their sins and destroy them for their evil. The Lord our God will destroy them" (Ps 94:23). Haman, the evil Persian who had never read those Hebrew words was about to feel their effect. In an act of self-control, King Ahasuerus got up from his couch and stalked to the garden, no doubt to process the ordeal that Haman had devised and the king himself had signed into law. He returned sometime later to find Haman clutching at his queen while begging for his life. How ironic that Haman—who had so little regard for the lives of others—would so value his own! This proved to be the final straw with the king. The attendants present covered Haman's head and pointed out the gallows that stood beside his house. In a final act of irony, King Ahasuerus ordered that this evil man be hung from the gallows that he himself had constructed to hang Mordecai. But again, where we see irony, God sees justice.