

## "Esther: God's Providential Hand" Esther 1-4

We all go through times in life when we are uncertain of what God is doing. In Esther we see a woman with a tragic past and uncertain future, but we can be confident in who God is and what He is doing. Join us as we gain insight from the life of Esther and her courageous stand for her people.

### **Introduction:**

**Providence is defined as** 1)divine guidance or care; 2)God's power sustaining and guiding human destiny.

God orchestrates the events of life. There are times in life when the hand of God seems present and evident. There are however, times when God seems distant and absent.

Charles Swindoll writes of the Book of Esther, "*God's presence is not as intriguing as His absence. Who has not longed for a word from God, searched for a glimpse of His Power, or yearned for the reassurance of His presence, only to feel that He seems absent from the moment? Distant. Preoccupied. Maybe even unconcerned. Yet later, we realize how very present He was all along.*"

This characteristic of God is called Providence. Although God is never mentioned by name in the writing of the book of Esther, his fingerprints are seen clearly across it.

### **The Extraordinary Ordinary**

God works in what I call The Extraordinary Ordinary. Our lives are meant to be just that, Extraordinarily Ordinary. Our lives are largely ordinary. Days come and days go. You go to school, we go to work, we laugh, we love, much of our life is incredibly ordinary.

In God's time and in God's way he **prepares** those he cares for, and **positions** those he calls to do something Extraordinary.

### **God's Providence Shows us that...**

#### **1. God is Actively at Work within the World**

- a. Either through His visible hand of miracles or his invisible hand of Providence.

- b. The Book of Esther opens with Historical Events. The fact that the Bible records History, tells us that God is invested within History.
- c. The Events of History are the tools God uses to perform His plan within the World.
- d. 3 Quick Points from this Historical Record:

**Point 1: God is Aware of World Events, and they are well within His control**

- i. A Banquet
  - 1. King of Great Power- Ch 1.1
  - 2. King of Great Plans- Ch1.2-3
  - 3. King of Great Perversion Ch 1.10-11
- ii. A Banishment
  - 1. Vashti's Refusal Ch 1.12
  - 2. Vashti's Removal Ch 1. 19
- iii. A Beauty Contest ch 2.1-4, 12-14
  - 1. Corralling Women
  - 2. Cosmetic Treatments
  - 3. One Night

**Point # 2: God is Aware of Your Events, and they are well within His control**

- 1. A Tragic Beginning- Ch 2.5-7
- 2. A Tyrants Bed- Ch 2. 8

**Point #3: God is always on Time, and in Control**

- i. God is always Preparing People for Divine Moments. What may seem like ordinary moments to us are nothing less than the perfect movements of our caring, careful, intentional Creator.
- ii. **We see this in the coming of Christ:** Galatians 4:4-5 (NASB95) 4But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, 5so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.
- iii. **We see this in the positioning of lives:** Acts 17:26-27 (NASB95) 26and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, 27that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;
- iv. **At Just the Right Moment: Esther is Made Queen- Esther 2.17**

**2. God Uses of Events in our Life Purposefully**

- a. What is God doing with me? **A Look from 50, 000 Feet**
  - i. **Preparing People**
    - 1. **There is no success without Preparation**

- a. If you're not practicing, somebody else is, somewhere, and he'll be ready to take your job—Brooks Robinson (American Professional Baseball Player 1937)
- b. Success always comes when Preparation meets Opportunity- Henry Hartman
- c. Urban Meyer-- current head coach of the Florida Gators football team that represents the University of Florida; "I have yet to be in a game where luck was involved. Well-prepared players make plays. I have yet to be in a game where the most prepared team didn't win"—Urban Meyer

## **2. The Wilderness- God's Preparation is Often Through Trial**

### **a. For Esther, no doubt she had endless questions.**

- i. God, why did you allow my parents to die?
- ii. God, why am I placed at the mercy of the lusts of this tyrant?

- b. James 1:2-4 (NASB95) 2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

### **c. God rarely uses a man greatly until he hurts a man deeply." --A.W. Tozer**

- d. There are few rocks harder than the human heart. It takes time to carve the character of Christ into the hearts of men. For some the pain of the past, and the uncertainty of the present cause hearts to harden. But, the same sun that hardens the clay melts the wax. For those who yield to God's will, their hearts become soft and supple material, ready to be molded by the Master.

- e. God Allows Trial to...
  - i. Produce Dependence
    - 1. As we See Our Weakness
  - ii. Produce Strength
    - 1. As we See How God Provides

## **3. Examples:**

- a. Moses
  - i. 40 years wondering after sheep before called into God's service
- b. David-
  - i. 30 years of Preparation
  - ii. Alone, forgotten, belittled, as a shepherd

- iii. Hunted by a crazed King
- c. Elijah
  - i. 3 years by the brook of Cherith, before called to battle the prophets of Baal
- d. Paul
  - i. 3 Years in Arabia
- e. Jesus
  - i. 30 years under his parents
  - ii. Hebrews 5:8 Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.

## ii. Positioning People

1. God allows Trials to bring People right where he wants them
  - a. Joseph
    - i. Sold as a Slave-Potifer
    - ii. Forgotten in Prison- in Egypt
    - iii. All Culminating in a moment when he interprets a dream and be brought to Pharaoh and save his people

## iii. Releasing to Perform His Purposes

- b. What do we do in the Fog? ***A look from the front lines***
  - i. The simple truth is that we don't get an inside look into the plan that God has for us. Many times we sit in the darkness, asking God "why is this happening to me?" I'm sure there were many days in the desert when Moses questioned what God was doing in his life. I'm sure there were many days on the hillside when David wondered if God had anything more significant planned for his days. I'm sure there were many days in prison where Joseph felt alone and abandoned. I'm sure Esther experienced many of these same emotions as she experience the death of her parents. I'm sure many nights during those years of beauty treatments she wondered why God would place her in a harem for the pleasure of a Tyrant.
  - ii. The reality is that we all walk through the wilderness. We all spend time in places we don't fully understand why God has places us there.
- c. So, the question I raise when I see this reality is ***"How do I walk through the Wilderness well?"*** Instead of becoming bitter, how can I become better prepared for what God has in store.
  - i. Use the Time of Preparation well by Embodying Esther's Characteristics
    1. Teachability-Listening to Authority
      - a. Esther 2.8-10- Listened to Mordecai
      - b. Esther 2.14-15- Listened to Hegai
    2. Patience- Waiting for God's timing
    3. Humility –Continually Listening
    4. Courage-

- a. Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen. **Winston Churchill**

ii. **Esther had 2 great qualities working against her, youth and beauty, success. With these come pride, arrogance and self-sufficiency.**

1. ***I am not young enough to know everything.*** Oscar Wilde, Irish dramatist, novelist, & poet (1854 - 1900)
  - a. *Matt Chandler*-tells of when he met with one of the elders at the church he pastors and proceeded to tell him of all the problems with evangelicalism and how he was personally going to fix all of them.
2. ***Satan***- Trusted in his beauty- Ezek 28.17-Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty
3. Proverbs 12:15- The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But a wise man is he who listens to counsel.
4. Proverbs 19:20 Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise

### 3. We Need to Recognize our Moment within the Plan

- a. How do we Recognize our Part?
- b. Every Great Story has a great stand
  - i. Hollywood know this
    1. Braveheart-One man's stand against a corrupt king
    2. Gladiator-One man's stand against a corrupt Caesar
    3. Avatar-One man's stand against Industry
    4. Toy Story 3- Where Woody leads his toy friends from the clutches of toddlers at Sunnyside Daycare
    5. *Every one of them rips off the Bible*
- c. The Situation
  - i. Esther 3.5-8- Haman's Plan
- d. The Solution
  - i. Esther 4.1
  - ii. Esther 4.5-14
- e. The Stand
  - i. We see Esther's Fear
  - ii. We see Esther try to reason out of her responsibility
  - iii. And we See her resolve to Stand
- f. God is looking for People to Stand in the Gap
  - i. When we see the Situation, and we see the Solution, what is needed is a stand.
  - ii. Fortunately there is one to stand for Us
    1. One that saw our situation- death from sin,

2. One that Saw the solution- His death for us
3. One that Stood for us
- iii. God Prepares and Positions People for these Moments
  1. ***During the Reformation Martin Luther was such a man, Prepared and Positions by the Father.*** Martin Luther: A few days before his death at Eisleben, he thus described his feelings at that critical period: "I was fearless, I was afraid of nothing; God can make one so desperately bold. I know not whether I could be so cheerful now."
  2. Nate Saint- See Article

**3. Jim Elliot-- "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose"**

**4. Application**

- a. Do I see the events in History as Part of God's Plan?
- b. Do I see myself as an playing a part in God's Plan?
- c. What am I doing to Prepare for moments of God's Use of me?
- d. Do I see my moments to stand?
  - i. At Work
  - ii. At Home
  - iii. With Friends
  - iv. With family

*Fit yourself for God's service, be faithful. He will presently appoint thee...In some unlikely quarter, in a shepherd's hut, or in an artisan's cottage, God has His prepared and appointed instrument. As yet the shaft is hidden in His quiver, in the shadow of His hand; but the precise moment at which it will tell with the greatest effect, it will be produced and launched on the air.*

-FB. Meyer