



Is This the Moment You Were Created For? (Part II)

2 Corinthians 5:17: (NASB) *Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

PLAYBILL

Christian Questions



Sometimes we are called by destiny. Queen Esther of the Old Testament showed us what can happen when circumstances open the door for uncharacteristic heroism. Several weeks ago, we told the story of how a Jewish teenage girl kept her calm and found a way to save her people at great personal risk. She worked within the constraints of her ancient society to rise to the highest level attainable, all while remaining focused and humble. Her story has inspired people for centuries and left scholars to dissect its literary construction and contemporary significance. As with much of the Bible, there are layers of lessons to explore, and Esther is no exception! Esther's story can be seen to parallel the walk of a Christian in thought-provoking and unique ways. What do Esther's experiences teach us about our faith and our choices?

This podcast is largely based on the work of a Bible scholar named Carl Hagensick. His insights have opened the door for us to analyze the book of Esther on a much deeper level by overlaying the path of our individual Christian walk onto the story. We recommend first listening to

Part 1 of this podcast, Episode #1057, where we walked through the book of Esther in its entirety to find many modern life lessons.



Picture the story of Esther as a stage play on two stages taking place simultaneously. For the first stage, we want to introduce you to the cast of characters involved.



The **STORY** Stage

Cast of Characters

Ahasuerus..... King of Persia
Mordechai....one of the king's trusted advisors
Esther.....second queen of Persia
Haman.....another trusted advisor; the villain
Vashti.....first queen of Persia



Playing simultaneously on the other stage, there is only one actor: YOU, your Christian life. We will divide YOU into various roles as well, so this will be Your Personal Stage.



Your **PERSONAL** Stage

Cast of Characters

Ahasuerus.....	Your MIND
Mordechai.....	The HOLY SPIRIT
Esther.....	Your NEW CREATURE
Haman.....	Your FLESH
Vashti.....	Your OLD CREATURE

2 Corinthians 5:17: (NASB) *Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

Those called to follow Christ, who surrender their own wills to do the will of God with the help of God's Holy Spirit (His power and influence) are called **NEW CREATURES**. This is our new spiritual life.



Who is going to control Ahasuerus...Haman or Mordecai? Who is going to be the counselor who carries the weight in the kingdom? Haman operating directly, or Mordecai operating through Esther/Esther operating through Mordecai?

The same plot applies on the second stage, Your Personal Stage. Who is going to control YOUR MIND? Is it going to be the FLESH (Haman) or the HOLY SPIRIT (Mordecai) working through the NEW CREATURE (Esther)?

Any good drama is divided into acts and scenes, and the book of Esther is no exception. We will look at the purpose of 12 scenes on these two stages - the Story Stage and Your Personal Stage.



Our Old Testament hero, Esther, will feed our New Testament discipleship! How will that work?

As with any Bible related experience, we draw lessons and principles by understanding the thinking, intentions and actions of those we observe. It is paramount that we remember Esther and Mordecai were always about faithfulness to God, Haman was always about himself and King Ahasuerus was the key decision maker. Who will influence the king?



Ahasuerus had a great banquet for the representatives of all the provinces in the City of Susa at the palace. During the banquet he commanded his wife, Queen Vashti, to come and present herself at the banquet. Vashti refused, and as a result was divorced by the king. Why did Vashti refuse? The Bible does not specifically say, but this scene shows us the more central issue - think of this scene as the role of man and woman in the marriage relationship.

Scene 1 was definitely not written by the women of the #metoo movement! We have to remember the strict patriarchal society of the time.

The reason for the drama in this first scene:

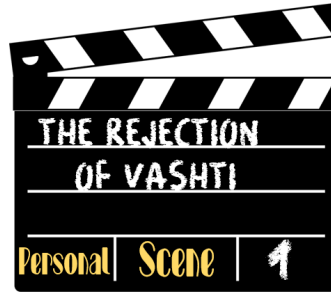
Esther 1:16-20: (NASB) ¹⁶In the presence of the king and the princes, Memucan (Memucan was a prince and one of the king's counsellors) said, Queen Vashti has wronged not only the king but also all the princes and all the peoples who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. (He reigned over 127 provinces including modern-day Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel and parts of other countries) ¹⁷For the queen's conduct will become known to all the women causing them to look with contempt on their husbands by saying, King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought in to his presence, but she did not come. ¹⁸This day the ladies of Persia and Media who have heard of the queen's conduct will speak in the same way to all the king's princes, and there will be plenty of contempt and anger. ¹⁹If it pleases the king, let a royal edict be issued by him and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media so that it cannot be repealed, that Vashti may no longer come into the presence of King Ahasuerus, and let the king give her royal position to another who is more worthy than she. ²⁰When the king's edict which he will make is heard throughout all his kingdom, great as it is, then all women will give honor to their husbands, great and small.

This was the core of the issue. In the society of that day, the woman was to be directed by the husband. He was, in the fullest sense, the "head of the house." She was, in the fullest sense, part of the "body." He was the head, and she was to do his wishes.

Vashti violated the custom of the day. If she had been allowed to get away with it, as the queen of the whole realm, this would pass down to all the wives and be a general women's rights movement that they feared would spread at least to the degree of the rule of the household of man and wife. For this reason, the king listened to the advice of Memucan recommending that Vashti



be banished and replaced by a new queen. How does this translate into the drama of scene 1 on Your Personal Stage?



Before we were called to God we had many “feast days” in our lives, happy celebrations and great events. But always there was one thing that spoiled our happiness. Whenever our MIND would tell our body to do something right, something righteous, the FLESH had its own way. The body said, “I don’t really want to,” and it would reject the commandments of the MIND. We found that the good we would do, we could not do. The OLD CREATURE would not be confined to the nobler, higher elements the MIND would require. This was insurrection of the very worst kind.

Your **PERSONAL** Stage

Cast of Characters

Ahasuerus.....	Your MIND
Mordechai.....	The HOLY SPIRIT
Esther.....	Your NEW CREATURE
Haman.....	Your FLESH
Vashti.....	Your OLD CREATURE

As a result, we finally came to a place where we recognized the counsel and calling from God. We realized if we permit this insurrection to continue, our whole life would be in turmoil and simply run an unfulfilled natural course. We came to the place where we recognized I must find a better self than the self I am. “Getting rid of Vashti” is the coming to the place where we divorce ourselves from the OLD CREATURE and begin looking for a new life.

The Apostle Paul gave us an insight into this internal battle:

Romans 7:14-25: (NASB) ¹⁴For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. ¹⁵For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. ¹⁶But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. ¹⁷So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. ¹⁸For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. ¹⁹**For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.** ²⁰But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. ²¹I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. ²²For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, ²³but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. ²⁴Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? ²⁵Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

The world has a lot to offer, and we can become ensnared by it.



The king decided to get rid of Vashti as his queen but did not know who to put in her place. He had no one in mind; he had not planned before that day to get rid of her until this event took place. He holds a “Miss Medo-Persia” contest with all the young women of the realm. They would all be brought before the king, and he would choose his new wife.

One of the king’s counselors, Mordecai, a foreigner, a Jew, sends his cousin named Hadassah into this “contest.” She is an orphan, and he is her guardian. Even though the girls probably did not have a say in the matter, we can assume this was important to them, as it was a great honor to be married to the king. Josephus the historian wrote that there were about 400 candidates.

The king made arrangements for all of the girls to appear at their very best. He had the keeper of his harem give them whatever they would require - any cosmetic, robe, garment, jewelry - anything that would make them the most beautiful to win the approval of the king.

Finally, the turn came for Hadassah to go in and present herself before the king:

Esther 2:12-13,15: (NASB) ¹²Now when the turn of each young lady came to go in to King Ahasuerus, after the end of her twelve months under the regulations for the women—for the days of their beautification were completed as follows: six months with oil of myrrh and six months with spices and the cosmetics for women - ¹³the young lady would go in to the king in this way: anything that she desired was given her to take with her from the harem to the king’s palace. ... ¹⁵Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai who had taken her as his daughter, came to go in to the king, she did not request anything except what Hegai, the king’s eunuch who was in charge of the women, advised. And Esther found favor in the eyes of all who saw her.

She was the only one who said, “No makeup or jewelry, please. I will go in just as I am.” She was the only one who appeared the fairest of all the women. Her name was changed from Hadassah, which means “myrtle tree,” a symbol of bitterness and sorrow, to Esther, meaning “star.” As a result, she wins the contest, becomes the queen and is crowned as the one to replace Vashti.





When we come to that place in our MIND where we decide that the OLD CREATURE is not righteous, we decide we want a new life, a new passion. We look around at our prospects: there is business, education, social work, philosophy, being a person who lives life for whatever pleasure or fulfillment life will bring. But for all the things we look at, there is one higher element introduced to us - following Christ as a NEW CREATURE by a higher influence, the HOLY SPIRIT. This higher prospect for life stands alone, because it is entirely different!

As we look at all the other prospects in our lives, we "dress them up" in their very best. When we look at the prospect of education, we think of ourselves as excelling. If we look at ourselves in medicine, we think of ourselves as becoming a great surgeon, maybe discovering the cure for a disease. We put all the "cosmetics" we can on each thing we look at.

But when the HOLY SPIRIT presents to us the concept of the NEW CREATURE in Christ, it tells it like it is. There are no cosmetics or fancy expensive clothes. It is presented plainly as genuine, for what it is - a way of sacrifice that, if followed, is able to produce Christlikeness. Of all the things we have looked at, this is the most beautiful. This is what I want for my life!

Just as the girls had an unlimited amount of choices in clothing and jewels, we also have unlimited opportunities to spend our time. But the Christian is called to a life of sacrifice to move higher.

We come to that place where instead of being a myrtle (bitter), we repent and come into a spiritual realm where we are Esther (a star), something that belongs to God and away from earthly things.



Esther 3:1: (NASB) *After these events King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him and established his authority over all the princes who were with him.*



Haman becomes the chief counselor of the king. Haman loves his new high position as Number 2 right under the king. He required that all men show their recognition and respect of his high position by bowing down to him.

Everybody bows, but one:

Esther 3:2: (NASB) *All the king's servants who were at the king's gate bowed down and paid homage to Haman; for so the king had commanded concerning him. But Mordecai neither bowed down nor paid homage.*

Mordecai would not compromise his principles even if there were consequences.

As a result, Haman became extremely angry at Mordecai and said, "I'm going to take it out on that man and everyone like him. He represents the most stubborn, hard-headed person around; he must be a Jew. So, let's get rid of him, and let's get rid of all those people." Haman makes plans and casts lots (the Persian word for "lots" was "purim") that on a certain day he will get rid of all of Mordecai's people, after seeking the king's permission.

Right after he gets power, Haman makes plans to eliminate whoever would stand in the way of that power.

It is interesting that this Haman was an Agagite. An Agagite means a person who comes from Agag.

We went into a lot of detail in Part 1 about what being an Agagite meant, and it is fascinating.

We backtrack roughly 1,000 years to see how we got to this point. Haman was a direct descendent of Amalek, the grandson of Jacob's brother, Esau. Amalek became a tribe, and the Amalekites were known for their love of self and reliance on violence to prove their superiority. They insisted God was absent in the world, and everything happened by chance. This is *contrary* to what the Jews believe and what the book of Esther teaches. Agag was an Amalekite king.

We read about Agag in 1 Samuel 15 when Saul was king of Israel, and he was VERY SPECIFICALLY told to slay all of the Amalekites, and even all their animals, and not to spare one of them. In a triumphant procession, Saul comes back into the city and the prophet of the Lord, Samuel, said, "What's the sound of cattle I hear? I thought you were going to kill all the cattle?" Saul said, "Who wants to do that? This makes a nice bounty of war. We are going to sacrifice these to God in due time." Samuel asked, "Who are these slaves I am seeing walking by? Those are Amalekites!" Saul responds, "Well, these are the very best and noblest. We can use them - right here we have the king, Agag!" Capturing the king alive would have played to Saul's ego.

If you never had Agag, you would never have had an Agagite. As a result, Samuel kills the king.



"Samuel Killing Agag of the Amalekites,"
by Rombout van Troyen,
Oil on panel, c. 1605-50
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dunkirk, France

Samuel kills Agag the next day, but either the night Agag was allowed to live, or before he was captured, he had relations with his wife and she conceived, or perhaps the sons of Agag were permitted to escape to Egypt. Either way, if Saul had been faithful 1,000 years prior, the book of Esther would never have the plot that developed. There would not be an Agagite in our story with his generational hatred of the Jews. COMPLETE OBEDIENCE TO GOD SAVES LATER REGRET.



Soon after we give our lives to God, we are faced with an ugly truth: our human desires are NOT dead. We got rid of the OLD CREATURE, but our FLESHLY desires grab hold of our affections and tell us internally, "Now, I do not really mind that you are a Christian, as long as you pay due homage to me, as long as you give me sufficient vacation time, luxuries of life, make sure I have a nice house to live in and a nice car to drive and you reverence me, that will be fine. You just go ahead and be a Christian." And everyone bows down to this except GOD'S SPIRIT - His power and influence in our lives. GOD'S SPIRIT says, "That is not the way you were called to! You said you were willing to give these things up, and until you are willing to do so, you will not be truly walking in Jesus' footsteps."

Faced with this dilemma we answer back to God, "Your way is so different from mine. I can't live this kind of life. I have to have these things," and we begin to develop thoughts and feelings within the flesh and try to push the NEW CREATURE out. This can be subtle - it can begin with little sins, little things that come in that we did not quite get rid of when we committed to walk in Jesus' footsteps.



These are our "Agagites" that tell us WE have a better way, not God. If we had really been faithful at the very beginning and "killed Agag," these things would not be coming up. But because we left a few Agagites to escape, they come back to haunt us and begin pressing for honor in our lives.

For more on dealing with temptations, please search our archives for Episode #986: "How Do I Deal With Enticing Temptations?" It contains specific steps to overcome temptation using the advice from James 4:7-10.



We need to identify our Agagites. Where are our weak areas? Bring them out into the light and look at how ugly they are. There are a lot of ways we can cover them up and justify them.

When things are enticing, we need to apply the "letter of the law" and not the "spirit of the law." Err on the side of caution even if we are being TOO cautious.

There is an internal struggle in our MINDS reflected in the story of Esther. The FLESH begins to deviously plot how it can rid itself of these higher spiritual desires.

How does Queen Esther show us the way to defeat our greatest enemy, which happens to be ourselves?

We do plot and scheme against God's influence in our lives, and it is SO easy to justify those schemes. After all, we are still very human, and we do have wants, needs and desires that rightfully belong to us. This is where the battle in each of our minds can easily and carelessly commit us to directions and decisions that are NOT in our best interest.



Haman's desire is to rid the empire of all of the Jewish people because of his anger against Mordecai. But he does not have the power to do it, because only Ahasuerus can sign the decree.

Haman approaches Ahasuerus with his proposition and uses two lines of reasoning to convince Ahasuerus that this should be done:

Esther 3:8-9: (NASB) *⁸Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from those of all other people and they do not observe the king's laws, so it is not in the king's interest to let them remain.⁹If it is pleasing to the king, let it be decreed that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who carry on the king's business, to put into the king's treasuries.*



This looks like it was a two-pronged attack.

"Ahasuerus, if you are going to have a unified kingdom, you have to have the same laws for all people. There are a certain people in the land, (he did not reveal that he meant the Jewish people) that have a different God, different laws, and it just doesn't work to have such a diverse culture among your people. You cannot allow this to continue. Rid yourself of this! And besides, if that's not enough for you, here is a bribe: 10,000 pieces of silver for your treasury." Presumably this money would have come from the murdered Jewish people. A little bribery never hurt, right?



Ahasuerus says, "That's not a bad idea; I'll go along with that," and he signs the decree to get rid of all the Jews not realizing Haman's secondary agenda.



As the FLESH begins its counterattack against our design to be a SPIRIT-DRIVEN follower of Jesus, it presents two arguments to the mind: "You know, you are a hypocrite! Every time you try to be a Christian, you are doing what is not natural to you. Your heart really isn't in it! The law of the SPIRIT is different from the law of the FLESH. Face it - you are earthly; you can't really live a spiritual life, and as a result, it is not in your best interest to keep this constant battle going in your mind. It is better you forget about all that spiritual stuff. It is too diverse from what you are. And besides, if you do that, I've got a little present for you. I will get you involved in business - you can make a fortune! Let's get you to have the home you want, drive the kind of car you want. You know you can! Focusing on material things is so much more sensible and natural."

Now your MIND acquiesces to your FLESHLY desires: "I guess that's probably right," you say, "I'm not really qualified to run this race; it is too big for me anyway." This is discouragement. In our Christian life, we "sign the decree" and say, "I will drop spiritual things for a while."



We say, "I am not good enough, so the Lord is not calling me." The FLESH starts playing on our MIND - "What is the point? There are so many other things you can do and be." We need to fight against discouragement.

For help with discouragement and feeling overwhelmed, please search our archives for Episode #924: "How Do You Stand When Life Gets Too Heavy?"





When someone comes to me and says, "I am not good enough," my immediate response is, "You know what? You aren't. And neither am I." This is a walk of grace. Whenever we get discouraged, we inevitably forget grace. **Hebrews 4:16: (KJV)** *Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace.* It is not the "throne of measurement" or the "throne of accomplishment." It is the throne of grace. The grace of God through Christ helps us to get up again. It is okay to fall down. Get back up and ask for God's grace.



We are *not* good enough, but Jesus is. Jesus is covering us and representing us as our Advocate to the Lord. It is his goodness we are using in order to fight our way back to God.

Fortunately, this is not the end and there is a hero in this story.



Esther is in the palace, totally oblivious to what is happening. She does not even notice that there has been a decree against the Jewish people. She has gotten into the routine of daily royal living. But Mordecai puts on sackcloth and ashes and sits right in front of her window, wailing. She says, "It is not appropriate for my cousin to be carrying on in such a way when I'm queen of the realm. He should be happy!"

She sends new clothes for him to put on, but he refuses to change clothes and begins his argument:

Esther 4:13,14: (NASB) ¹³ Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, *Do not imagine that you in the king's palace can escape any more than all the Jews.* ¹⁴ *For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?*

Never underestimate the power of a voice with influence. Mordecai commanded respect!

Haman was not the only one with a two-pronged argument. Mordecai says to Esther, "Our God is not weak. He will deliver the Jews, with or without our help." It is not dependent upon Esther. But if she does not help, her life is at stake. She will not be delivered, because she and her father's house will be cut off. "And besides," he questions, "why do you think you became queen in the first place? Maybe that is the very reason the Lord has put you in this position, so you can fight this battle and win this victory for God's people." And Esther says, "I'll think about it." Fear for one's life is a BIG obstacle. She takes three days to fast and pray and think it over.



This is the true effect of her respect for Mordecai - deep and soul-searching consideration:

Esther 4:16: (NASB) *Go, assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa, and fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens also will fast in the same way. And thus I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish.*

She recognized that one did not come to the king without his bidding. She said, "It's been 30 days since I've seen the king." This is an important element we will talk about soon.



When we come to those places of discouragement, we go on blissfully unaware for a while. We say, "I'll get by." Every day can't be euphoric. We live in the world, and we have to put up with the world! In short, we get comfortable and settle. It takes God's HOLY SPIRIT, His power and influence, to show us how desperate we really are.

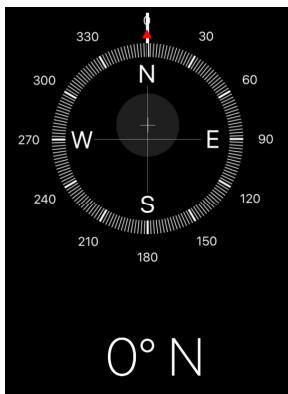
The HOLY SPIRIT presents us with two arguments: "God has a plan, and in that plan He calls a select few to follow in Jesus' footsteps - to live and die for the will of God. Through these called-out disciples comes the deliverance for the whole world of mankind. This will happen - with or without YOU. If you do not wake up, your spiritual opportunity will cease because you hesitated. It is not dependent upon you, but YOU are dependent upon you. And besides, maybe the Lord called you because He wanted you to fight this special battle, so you would save others and have a special place in that kingdom, because you had overcome in this particular area in your life."

God's direction helps us overcome the lethargy of the FLESH. When the HOLY SPIRIT shows us something so significant, the "ESTHER" in us - our NEW CREATURE listens! It presses itself into the action of seeking and following a directive from God. We pray and consider deeply.

This response begins the phase of recovery in the book of Esther and in our lives.

After not communicating with the king for 30 days, Esther could not have predicted what the king's mood was after their last meeting. She was really taking a chance.

In our Christian walk, we may come to a time when we have been distracted and have temporarily lost touch with our "true north." This time away from spiritual things brings us to a point of discouragement. Finally we realize, "I've got to make a stand for the Lord. I can't let it go. If I perish, I perish." We decide we HAVE to make a stand for God and assert our true calling of discipleship.





Once we have been away from the Lord for a period of time, we start doubting if God will bring us back in. It is the lesson of the Prodigal Son. Have I gone so far that I am not worth recovering?



We need to trust our "Mordecai," the HOLY SPIRIT, God's power and influence, within us. As the saying goes, Esther did not know what the future held, but she knew who held the future. Because of the trust she had in Mordecai, she was able to act.

We do not get to see what is right in front of us, but we know that with God's power and influence, we have the ability to move forward.



When she first approached the king, she had no makeup or fancy clothes and just went as she was. That now changes:

Esther 5:1-3: (NASB) ¹Now it came about on the third day that Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace in front of the king's rooms, and the king was sitting on his royal throne in the throne room, opposite the entrance to the palace. ²When the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, she obtained favor in his sight; and the king extended to Esther the golden scepter which was in his hand. So Esther came near and touched the top of the scepter. ³Then the king said to her, What is troubling you, Queen Esther? And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be given to you.

Can you picture the scene? She is so apprehensive. This time she dresses up and puts on her very best clothes - the garments of royalty - and hangs out by the door. He sees her and says, "Where have you been? I haven't seen you in a month! What do you want? You can have anything up to half the kingdom!"



When that NEW CREATURE - that spirit begotten mind - says, "I am going to claim my royal standing and my justification. I will put on the royal robes and say, 'Lord, you called me, you keep me!'" It then begins to present itself again, standing humbly yet royally. The NEW CREATURE is royalty because it is of God.



As soon as our MIND sees this, it thinks, "Where have you been? I have not thought about you for so long. I LOVE spiritual things! Anything you want - half the kingdom - it is yours! What do you want?"

Esther said, "What I really want is to invite you to dinner. Bring Haman with you - let's have a banquet." This must have puzzled the king. She did not ask for anything - she just wanted to have dinner.

Our spiritual mind, our NEW CREATURE, says the same thing. It really wants the clear and personal attention of our physical mind.

**Now that our attention is focused,
what has to be done for the mind of Christ to win the day?**

When God's power is at work in our spiritual mind, it is never hurried or rash. God called us for a reason and when we do falter, He has a way of showing us not only where we went wrong but what to do about it as well. Queen Esther clearly illustrates this spiritual thinking as she turns the tables.



She prepared a royal feast with wine and food. She laid out the fruits, and the king says, "This is delightful. I am sure you want something from me, though. What do you want? It is yours up to half the kingdom." She intriguingly says, "I do have a favor to ask: I would like you to come back to another dinner."



"Esther, Ahasuerus and Haman,"
by Pieter Fransz De Grebber, (1628)
National Museum, Stockholm, Sweden



When our NEW CREATURE, our spiritual mind, begins asserting itself, and the MIND asks, "What do you want?" the NEW CREATURE answers, "I want to show you something. I want to show you the prospects I showed you way back when. I want to lay out in front of you the bounty of the fruit of the Spirit: patience, joy, longsuffering, etc. I want you to taste those fruits." When the MIND begins tasting them, it thinks, "Delicious! What do you want?" "I want you to come taste them again." The NEW CREATURE holds back. The time is not quite right to reveal its full scope of truth, because something has not yet happened. We will find out what that is as we go forward in our drama.



No wonder he could not sleep - he is so curious to know what the queen wanted. She was smart and unpredictable, and that made her more desirable. With insomnia, it sometimes helps to find the most boring thing you can find and try to read it so it puts you to sleep. So he said, "Read me the history books! Get the king's chronicles out." As they were reading to him, they read about a time when there was a plot against his life that Mordecai had uncovered. "I forgot all about that. What did we do for Mordecai?" "We didn't do a thing." "Tomorrow morning, we are going to correct THAT."

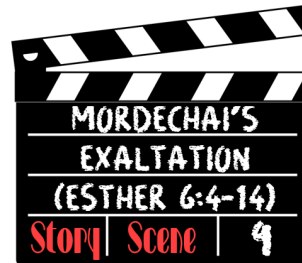


This is the real turning point in our Christian lives. When the NEW CREATURE, our spiritual mind, reasserts its ascendancy over our physical MIND, we might literally spend some sleepless nights. We toss, we turn, we wonder, we think, we ask...what is expected of me? We begin reviewing our life and remember back when we first heard the call of God. We remember how things were in our way that could have destroyed us, because Satan does not want us to



follow God. There was a plot to kill us - just as Satan put death before all of mankind. We remember God's providence. Our human MIND thinks, "What did I ever do to express gratitude for that spiritual influence? Nothing. Tomorrow morning, I'm going to fix that." And with that, we rest.

This is the time we really embrace Christian growth in our MIND. The battle shifts, and we are becoming more spiritual. But the next morning, something happens.



The king wakes up refreshed and says, "The first order of business, we have to do something for Mordecai, but what? If I only had a good counselor to talk to." Haman had just come in for approval to have Mordecai personally killed, so he was in the king's court. "Bring Haman in! Haman, I have a problem. There is someone in this kingdom I want to honor, and I don't know how to do that properly. What would you suggest?"

Haman said, "Oh! I know what you have in mind." If he were humble, Haman would have asked who the king was talking about. Pride is blinding.

Haman says, "I will tell you what - put this man on your own horse. Put a crown on the horse so everyone knows it is the king's horse, give him your best robe, take your most trusted servant, and lead him through the streets of the city and say, "Hey everybody, this is a man the king likes! This is the one of favor; the king is honoring this man!"



And the king says, "Great idea! You be the servant; do that to Mordecai!" Haman had to do it. Now he was really mad: "I got the order to kill the Jews, but I am still not happy as long as Mordecai is alive."

"The Triumph of Mordecai,"
by Jean François, (c. 1736), oil on canvas
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



When we wake up that next morning, we ask ourselves, "What would I do if I wanted to be honored?" We want to tell how good we are, especially now that we are on the right path. We want others to know we have something to offer. So, we suggest this to our human MIND. "If I really wanted to honor myself, I would let others know what a good person I am." But now, our MIND as a NEW CREATURE announces, "That's exactly what I want you to do. You tell everybody how good God's HOLY SPIRIT is. You tell everybody what His providence has done for you."

"Wait! That wasn't the plan! It was about ME, how good I am, not about how good God's power is!" When we obey our NEW CREATURE, our FLESH must obey. The flesh is irritated and might even get annoyed, but spirituality reigns now and that means the exultation of God's power - His HOLY SPIRIT!



People ask how, 21 years later, we can produce a podcast every week. This opportunity to talk about God's word to people all over the world is overwhelming in its privilege and in its responsibilities. I manage it by looking at just one week at a time and by the grace of God. This is what helps me cope. I ask, "What am I supposed to do this week, and how does the grace of God deliver me to be able to get it done?" God does not open doors and just make it easy. Sometimes the opportunity goes through tunnels and over mountains. Looking at the big picture is too scary, because it is a never-ending thing. "Just for this week, Lord, how can I rely on your grace to get my responsibilities accomplished?" This is what gets me through. I have to keep God's grace and His Spirit up front.



A second banquet was held. The king asked, "Esther, I know you want something besides continuing to invite me to supper. What is it?" Esther responded, "I do have a problem. There is somebody who is trying to kill me." "But you're the queen!" "Someone wants to kill me and my people as well." "Who is that wicked person?" She points, "Haman there!" Haman freaked out, and this was the last thing he or the king expected. The king goes outside to cool off. Haman throws himself at the queen and says, "Mercy!" The king comes in at this exact moment, and the optics are bad.



The king roars, "And now you are attacking the queen as well? Right in front of me?" The king interprets this wrong and calls for his guards to hang Haman. His anger knows no bounds. Haman's death sentence is given in this chapter.



The first banquet is when the NEW CREATURE begins first asserting itself. It set before us the fruit of the Spirit. The second banquet is when it begins showing us we can make progress, that we can *attain* this fruit of the Spirit. This shows growth and maturity. It shows us now we have the wine (a symbol of joy) besides the fruit. We begin processing the reality of this powerful spiritual prospect.

The king is our MIND. Haman is our OLD CREATURE doing what we know is not right. It is not enough to love righteousness, but according to Hebrews 1:9 as quoted from Psalms 45:7, we are supposed to hate evil. When our MIND is looking at the two of them, our FLESH (Haman) vs. NEW CREATURE (Esther), we have to get rid of that FLESH.

That is when we know whatever the NEW CREATURE wants, "she" can have. We can obtain the joys of the Lord set before us. And we ask, "What are those? What do you want?" All we really want is to live. The FLESH wants to take the life of the NEW CREATURE by distraction, disappointment and failure.

Just like the king, we go out and think it over, for it is a concept that is hard to grasp. Now the FLESH, like Haman, begins begging for itself. The MIND says, "That's IT! The FLESH is always taking advantage of the NEW CREATURE, the spiritual mind. I am going to be rid of this FLESH once and for all." We come to that determination, and we completely put down the FLESH in our lives.



It is interesting that when this happens, something else happens:

Esther 8:1-2: (NASB) ¹*On that day King Ahasuerus gave the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews, to Queen Esther; and Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had disclosed what he was to her.* ²*The king took off his signet ring which he had taken away from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.*

Your **PERSONAL** Stage

Cast of Characters

Ahasuerus.....	Your MIND
Mordechai.....	The HOLY SPIRIT
Esther.....	Your NEW CREATURE
Haman.....	Your FLESH
Vashti.....	Your OLD CREATURE

This is one of the most profound passages in the entire book. It reveals to us the place in our lives where we no longer just think about and promise to give up the FLESH, but we actually give it up! Once the FLESH is destroyed we are truly given control over the stewardship of all that the FLESH had previously owned. Now we are in harmony - the HOLY SPIRIT drives our spiritual mind, our NEW CREATURE, and our humanity - both MIND and body - dutifully follow.

The victory is won although there are still a few scenes left in our drama.

With Haman gone, how does the king undo the evil of a proclaimed edict that cannot be undone?

The story of Esther gives a true sense of reality. If this were a fictional movie script, the removing of Haman, his diabolical plots and the elevation of Mordecai would have served as a perfect ending. However, life does not work that way. There is always more to fight, more to do and others to save.



The law of the Medes and Persians was a special law that could not be broken. The king himself could not remand the law. Without realizing his beloved Esther was Jewish, he had commanded that all the Jews be attacked and killed, and he could not change it, despite that he saw the law was wrong. He said, "I will make another law, where the Jews can defend themselves." This would discourage those who would kill a Jew, as they were not counting on them having weapons to fight back. Despite that second decree, people still tried but were slaughtered because God blessed the Jews. There were so many slaughtered but not enough to get rid of all their enemies - that they had another war for a second day.

We still have battles to fight!



There are two edicts. We cannot change the original edict - we cannot change our past, but we can adjust the trajectory of what is going to happen in spite of it. The second edict says, "Fight back from what your past has done so you can stand before God."

God's providence extends differently in this scene. He did not give the FLESH (Haman) victory over the SPIRIT (Mordecai), but He also is not going to give your NEW CREATURE (Esther) the victory over the extended FLESHLY desires of Haman's unjust decree upon all faithful ones. What God does provide is the weapons with which to fight this evil. Victory takes work.

God tells us that the battle is ours, and if we fight in His SPIRIT we will win, no question about it. This causes many elements of the FLESH to say, "I do not want to fight someone who is going to fight back!" Other elements of the FLESH are more stubborn and still want to fight.

We do not just sit back as Christians and wait for God to take care of us. We still have to fight because we are still living IN the world; the goal is to not live OF the world. Our previous decisions in life may have set us on a path that needs correcting. God says, "Work on it. Fight the darkness from your experiences."

If we keep our trust in those weapons, we will find they are *mighty through God in the pulling down of strongholds*. (2 Corinthians 10:4) Those weapons counter the enemies of the HOLY SPIRIT and of the NEW CREATURE, and the enemies are, one by one, defeated in the lives of the faithful.

In the story of Esther, there was an unexpected side effect of this battle.

While many of the enemies of the Jews were slaughtered, something else happened:

Esther 8:17: (NASB) *In each and every province and in each and every city, wherever the king's commandment and his decree arrived, there was gladness and joy for the Jews, a feast and a holiday. And many among the peoples of the land became Jews, for the dread of the Jews had fallen on them.*

All of a sudden, some of the people thought it was not a bad idea to convert to Judaism! They could not deny God's providence and power. People notice.



That is just as important on our personal stage:

Matthew 5:16: (KJV) *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

Everybody does not glorify God now just because they see our good works. They may hate us. But it glorifies God, and inevitably in God's future kingdom they will see it.

All the witnessing we do and all the words we preach are good and necessary, but must be backed up by true sacrificial Christian living. This is a spiritual victory that is seen and felt by those we touch. The greater battle for the people comes later in God's plan, and the outward evidence of God's light putting down its enemies of darkness for all to see is what will eventually win that day. When the people see the power of His providence and His will, many in the land will begin to turn from their sins.

We can do this on a smaller level now in our lives, but it will happen on a larger scale according to God's prophecies.

Preach the gospel. Use words if necessary. - Rick's Uncle Steve

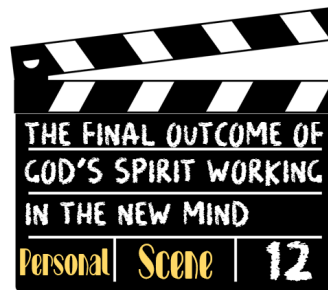


It was a great day for the Jews. They had a feast of joy and gladness, and they decided to have this feast to commemorate this event every year. The feast of Purim is a time of rejoicing and happiness, commemorating the day when God, through Esther, saved their people. This year Purim will be celebrated on March 20 and 21, 2019.

And so, if God's HOLY SPIRIT through our new MIND is gaining control of our FLESH, the story is not over unless we have our feast of Purim. This feast is like having Ebenezers, the things we do to commemorate, to remember, those victories the Lord has given us. Samuel set a stone of remembrance called an Ebenezer to commemorate God's

help to the Israelites in their victory over the Philistines. In 1 Samuel 7:12, he said, *Hitherto has the Lord helped us*. It is good for us to set up our Ebenezers so we can recall all the times the Lord helped us.

It might be verbally counting our blessings, a song we sing over and over again; it might be the verse of a Psalm we memorized at the time of that trial; it might be sharing that experience with those in our congregation, where we say, *Hitherto has the Lord helped us*.



It is here that our personal story can find a conclusion. Only after such trauma and faithfulness are we then able to celebrate the victories that our “Mordecai” has taught our “Esther” to give us in our lives. These show us how our NEW CREATURE controls the MIND and how the HOLY SPIRIT does become our chief counselor. It is a victory won by never giving up on the grace of God and His power and influence in our lives.

A friend of mine asked me to respond to the rhetorical question, *Is anything too hard for the Lord?* asked in [Genesis 18:14](#) and [Jeremiah 32:27](#). Of course the answer is no, but because we have free will with its ability to choose, It can be difficult for the Lord to change our stubborn, selfish ways. It may be difficult for God to change our hearts (not counting some supernatural intervention). Even after seeing all of His goodness and knowing that righteousness trumps sin every time, we fall into temptation, we doubt, we second guess and we fall into a routine without moving forward with purpose and intention to bring Him glory. Who will control our MIND? Our spiritual mind, our NEW CREATURE, must have such influence over our physical MIND that we will bring glory to God.

This account is an interesting introduction to what would happen a generation later. The book of Nehemiah recounts the events of the Jews finally being permitted to go back to Israel and rebuild the city walls of Jerusalem. In [Nehemiah 2](#), when Nehemiah sought this decree, the king and queen gave the decree to go back and rebuild the walls. Esther set a precedent for the Jews to be able to take care of themselves. It is reasonable to assume that her influence was still there as a major backdrop to Nehemiah’s work.



Our lives can have an influence on others.

This has been a great example how no matter how many times you look at the Bible, there is always a new gem to uncover. God has allowed us to have this book of Esther to reveal so many lessons, reminders and warnings for our own Christian walk.

This is a story of victory and heroism in the Old Testament, but it is also a story of victory and heroism in our own life. Focus on the details of our own mind and the battle that goes on within us. God's power and influence should be our counselor, guiding us and giving our new mind the strength to overcome and live a life that is a glory to Him.

*So, is this the moment you were created for?
For Jonathan and Rick (and Julie!) and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*

Aim higher. Stay focused. — Brandon Adams



Join us next week for our podcast on March 11, 2019:

Ep. #1064: "Is He Who Hesitates Really Lost?"

The Story of Lot

