

# **ESTHER'S EXALTATION— OR, WHO KNOWS? NO. 1777**

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 27, 1884,  
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Then Mordecai told them to answer Esther, “Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king’s palace, more than all the Jews. For if you altogether hold your peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house shall be destroyed: and who knows whether you are come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”  
Esther 4:13, 14.*

THE appeal of Mordecai in his pressing time of distress was to one single person, namely, to Esther. I believe that I shall do better this morning by making my sermon an address to individuals than by speaking of nations or Churches. I assuredly believe that England has been raised up as a nation and brought to her present unique position that she may be the means of spreading the Gospel throughout all the nations of the earth. I judge that God has blessed the two great nations of the Anglo-Saxon race—England and the United States—and given them pre-eminence in commerce and in liberty on purpose, that in such a time as this they may spread abroad the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Woe to these nations if they fail to fulfill their solemn obligations! If, being raised up for a purpose, they refuse to perform it, they shall melt away. If, being armed and carrying bows, they turn back in the day of battle, both empires will perish as surely as did the power of Macedon and the dominion of Rome. We ought to be very careful as a people to act upon the rule of righteousness and the principles of peace, for any other conduct is inconsistent with our high calling. We are entrusted with great opportunities—if we do not rightly use them, the New Zealander of Macaulay may yet survey the ruins of this empire city.

“You and your father’s house shall be destroyed,” said Mordecai to Esther, and he says the same to us! Oh, that England may know the day of her visitation! We might properly say of any Christian Church that it has its own appointed place in the purposes of Divine Mercy. If the candle is lit, even though it is set upon a golden candlestick, it is not lit for *itself*, but that it may give light to all that are in the house. If any Church fails to bless others and so proves unfaithful to her solemn trust, the Lord will take away the candlestick out of its place and leave the unfaithful to mourn in darkness. Remember the Lord’s warning voice, “Go you, now,

unto My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of My people Israel.”

Remember, also, unfaithful Jerusalem, whose house is left unto her desolate because she obeyed not the voice of the Lord. The Church in Rome was once a Church of high commanding influence for good—you know what it has become. Some other churches are on the way, I fear, to the same dreadful end. God grant that none of the Churches with which we are connected as Christian people may ever either apostatize from the faith, or grow lax and worldly, or become indifferent to the Glory of God and the salvation of men! I might thus speak to each Church and say, “Who knows whether you are come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” My Brothers and Sisters, it is a wonderfully easy thing to denounce the faults of a government or of a nation—to complain of this being done, and of that being left undone—and this amusement may only serve to divert our conscience from its more profitable duties at home.

But consider the matter and remember that in a free state we, each one, are part and parcel of the nation—and of the government—and we are, each one, personally responsible, in our measure and degree, for all the acts of the nation. It is an easy matter to tie up our country to the halberdiers, like a criminal, and then to scourge it without mercy, but it would be a far more profitable business to use the whip of criticism upon ourselves! The same is true with regard to a Church. Men are too apt to condemn, in the mass, what they tolerate in themselves as individuals. But why are we so ready to accuse the Churches? Why are we so censorious as to what the Churches do and what the Churches are? Who make up the Churches? Why, we, each one, by our influence, help to make the Churches good, or bad, or indifferent, as the case may be!

Therefore, I will not waste time in generalities, but I will come to *personalities*. I will follow Mordecai's tack and speak only to Esther—that is to say, to each one who may happen to be here to whom God has entrusted opportunity, talent and position. I would urge them to remember that there is a something for each Believer to do, a work which he cannot delegate to another. A task which it is his privilege to be permitted to undertake—which it will be to his solemn disgrace and detriment if he does not execute—but which will be to his eternal glory under God if he is found faithful in it. The Gospel assures us that the great Householder has committed talents “to every man according to his several ability.” Our hope of success, this morning, in our sermon, shall lie in your individualizing yourselves and hearing the voice of the Spirit of God saying to each one, “Who knows whether *you* are come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

I shall lay out my sermon in four parcels, arranging it under four words.

**I.** The first word is LISTEN! LISTEN to my words, as Mordecai desired Esther to listen to him. Listen while God, the Lord, speaks to your heart and calls you to your high vocation. Listen, first, to a question. Brother, *will you separate your interests from those of your people and your God?* I do not think that Mordecai was afraid that Esther would do so, but still, it is sometimes well to prevent an evil before we perceive it, and he did so by

saying, "Do not think that you will escape in the king's palace." It was possible, that being a queen, it might enter into her mind that she would be safe even if all the rest of the Jews were put to death. It would be a painful thing that her countrymen should be destroyed, but the stroke might not touch her in the seclusion of the palace where she had, "not yet showed her kindred nor her people."

She would still remain the favored wife of the great king and she might, therefore, selfishly look to herself and leave those who were in peril to look to themselves or to their God, while she coldly hoped that the Lord would somehow or other give them deliverance. Does that temptation come across the path of any one of us? It may. You may say, "I shall be saved though the city should perish in its iniquity. Though the people are steeped in poverty and ignorance, I shall enjoy plenty and live in the Light of God. I know the Lord, myself, and that is my main concern. If the heathen perish, I am not one of them, and I am thankful that it will not interfere with my destiny." Will you argue in this selfish manner? Will you follow the wicked policy of separating your own *personal* interests from those of your Redeemer and His Church? If so, your ship is wrecked before it leaves the harbor!

You are no child of God if this principle holds the mastery over you! Your salvation lies not in your separation from Christ and His Church, but in your *union* with them! Over the sea of life, there is no passing in safety but in the vessel which carries your Lord *and* His disciples. Are you going to sail in a separate boat, or will you try to swim across the sea in your own strength? Then look to yourself—and expect disaster! If your interests and Christ's are to be separated, you must supply *yourself* with atonement, with righteousness, with spiritual life and with heavenly food! Yes, you must make a Heaven for yourself. You *cannot* do this and, therefore, it would be your ruin to attempt to stand alone. Do you wish to be joined with Jesus so as to be rescued from Hell? I tell you, Sirs, there is no receiving Christ unless you receive His doctrine and rule! You must receive this Grace, also, namely, that you give yourself to Him to make His interests *your* interests, His life *your* life, His Kingdom *your* kingdom, His Glory *your* glory!

Your personal welfare will be found in submergence into Christ. Sink or swim with your Lord and His cause! Do you mean to separate yourself from the Church of God and say, "I shall look to my own salvation, but I cannot be supposed to take an interest in saving others"? In such a spirit as that, I do not say you will be lost, but I say you are *already* lost! It is as necessary that you be saved from *selfishness* as from any other vice! Some of our worst fetters are those which are forged by selfishness—and this is one of the chief bonds which our Redeemer must burst for us. We must live unto God and love others as God has loved us, or else we are still in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity. I conceive that nobody who professes to be a Christian would deliberately wish to set up a private estate apart from Christ and His cause. Then if you are partners in name, be partners in fact!

If you have fellowship with Christ—remember that it is of the essence of fellowship that you are in co-partnership with Him—if He is a loser, you

are a loser and you are to fret about it. And if He is a gainer, you are a gainer and you are to joy therein! He bids you rejoice with Him that He has found His sheep that was lost! I ask again—Are you determined to set up a separate interest from Christ? If you are, say so deliberately and count the cost. Mark that man, for though he may, in his selfishness, spread himself abroad and flourish like a green bay tree, yet the day shall come when he shall wither and the place that knows him shall know him no more, forever! O professed servant of God, minister, deacon, or private church member, you shall *perish* if once you begin to live unto yourself! Remember those Words of God, you careless women, “She that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives.” And listen, you selfish religionists, to this Truth of God—“If you live after the flesh, you shall die.”

Listen to a second question. *If you could separate your interests from those of the cause of God, would you thereby secure them?* You are a Church member. You think, also, that you are a living member of the body of Christ—but you are tempted to look to yourself and to leave others to their shifts. Listen—“Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace, more than all the Jews?” Is it so, that because you are, yourself, a member of a flourishing Church and because you enjoy all sorts of Christian privileges you, therefore, harden your heart concerning dying Churches and desponding saints? Do you imagine that the body can be sick and yet you, as a member of it, will not suffer? I tell you, if the Church of God goes aside, it will be to your injury! If the Truth of God is not preached, you will be a loser! If Christian life is not vigorous, you will be weakened! When a baneful atmosphere is over other Christians, you will breathe it! Sinners cannot be left in their spiritual death without creating a foulness in the air which is to the peril of us all.

If this great city is left to seethe and rot in its infidelity and misery and filthiness, fancy not that you Christian people will escape! You dwell with these outcasts and you are already feeling their influence—and will feel it still more if they do not feel yours. How far and how deep that participation will go, I will not venture to prophesy, for I am no Prophet, neither the son of a Prophet—but there are elements now fermenting which threaten, first, the existence of the commonwealth and next, the liberties of Christian worship! Listen good, my Brothers and Sisters—things cannot long remain as they are. This great flood of wretchedness must be stopped or it will sweep us all away!

I know not what of evil may yet come of the negligence of the Christian Church towards the population with which it is surrounded. Those wretched beings who starve in overcrowded rooms will not die unavenged if nothing more comes of it than the sin which is begotten of need. If you live in a house well-ventilated and well-drained, and you have near you foul hovels—filthy, dilapidated, overcrowded—when the fever breeds there, it will not respect your garden wall—it will come up into your windows, strike down your children, or lay you, yourself, in the grave! As such mischief to health cannot be confined to the locality in which it was born, so is it with *spiritual* and *moral* disease—it must and will spread on all sides!

This may be a selfish argument, but as we are battling with selfishness, we may fitly take Goliath's sword with which to cut off his head! You

Christian people suffer if the Church suffers! You suffer even if the *world* suffers. If you are not creating a holy warmth, the chill of sin is freezing you! Unconsciously, the death which is all around will creep over you who are idle in the Church—and it will soon paralyze all your energies unless, in the name of God, you awaken yourselves to give battle to it! You must unite with the Lord and His people in winning the victory over sin, or sin will win the victory over you! Listen to this and let it sink into your mind.

Next, remember, for your humiliation, that God can do without you! Enlargement and deliverance will arise to His people from another place if it comes not by us. If the Lord were tied up to any one man, or any one Church, or any one nation, it were treasonable for that person, Church, or nation to be negligent! But as the Lord waits not for man, neither tarries for the sons of men, it becomes them to mind what they are doing. He can do without us! When He looked and there was no man, His own arm brought salvation! And as it was of old, so will it be again. Remember that! The great Owner of the vineyard will have fruit at the end of the year and if yonder tree does not bear it, He will cut it down—why let it cumber the ground? If the farmers consult their own gain and plot to gain the inheritance for themselves, their Lord will destroy them, “and will let out His vineyard unto other farmers which shall render Him the fruits in their seasons.” He will effect His purpose! He will fetch home His banished. He will gather together His scattered sheep. He will cause the earth to be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea—and if we do not gather in the wanderers, or spread the knowledge of His Grace—the work will be done by more faithful men.

The Spirit says unto the Church in Philadelphia, “Hold fast that which you have, that no man take your crown.” The crown of this Church has been soul-winning—suffer none to rob you of it! If any one of you has already gained the high honor of bringing sinners to Christ, do not lose it by a future life of sloth or powerlessness! Hold fast your zeal and perseverance, that you may be rewarded at the last day. He can do without you—remember that, O servant of the Lord! We are apt to think ourselves wonderfully important and begin to fret if we are put aside from our work for a little while, but perhaps this affliction is necessary to teach us—and to teach all that know us—to cease from man and to look to God alone! It would be a sad thing to exhibit pride and self-conceit and provoke the Lord to show the world how readily He can dispense with our labors. With this Truth of God in view, my heart cries—

**“Dismiss me not from Your service, Lord,  
But train me for Your will.”**

Here follows a still more sobering reflection. Remember, that as God can do without us, *it may be He will do without us*. It might come to pass that God will say, “I will no more bless the world by this England. She has become selfishly mercantile. She cares more for commerce than for righteousness—she is drunken and infidel—I will give her up. Her merchants care nothing for the poor, whose labor is ill-requited. Let her pass away as all oppressors must and let the nations say—‘Alas, alas, that great city, that mighty city! For in one hour so great riches is come to nothing.’” He may say to any Church, “Repent! Or else I will come unto you quickly and will fight against you with the sword of My mouth.” “Ichabod” has been

written before and may be, again, on places where once there shone upon the forefront the inscription—"Holiness unto the Lord." So, also, any man may be set aside, even as the Lord put away Saul and said to him, "You have rejected the Word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel." Though, like Samson, a hero may have slain his thousands and the hopes of Israel hang upon the hero—yet shorn and blinded, he may yet grind with slaves at the mill if his lusts enslave him!

The Lord may decline to use us if we are not prepared, in such a time as this, to do our very utmost and to lay ourselves out for the cause of His Truth and Holiness. It may please the Lord to say of a wicked and slothful servant, "Take away his talent from him and give it to him that has ten talents." He may say to any pastor among us, "Let his habitation be desolate and his bishopric let another take." Listen, I pray you, to this warning from the Lord! Hear, O Heaven, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord will judge His people, and to whom much is given, of him shall much be required.

Listen to yet one thing more. *How will you bear the disgrace if ever it comes upon you, of having allowed your golden opportunities to be wasted?* What if Israel had been destroyed for lack of Esther's intercession? Her name would have been a byword among other nations as a base and traitorous woman! If the people had been spared by some other means because she had refused her mission—as long as there lived a Jew, they would have kept no feast of Purim—but have *curse*d her memory! When I think of the neglects of our own ancestors, I am anxious that we take warning by them. There are, at this moment, valleys in the Highlands which are thoroughly Romish. Why? They were not carefully evangelized at the time of the Reformation! If the workers of that period had done their work thoroughly, there would have been no Romish valleys in Presbyterian Scotland!

Ireland still cowers under the shadow of the Pope! There was a hopeful time when better things were promised, but this was allowed to pass by—and what can be done to rescue Ireland now? Times do not tarry and tides do not wait—and if we do not avail ourselves of them while they are with us, our descendants may lament our neglects! I fear that the best among us can remember with regret times which we have suffered to pass over us unimproved. We can never call them back again! You did not train your children—they are men and women, now, and will not listen to you. Oh, parents, why did you not speak to them when they would have listened? But what if a whole *life* should glide away in living for yourselves, in living for your own comfort and enriching? What if you have done nothing, in all these years, for the cause of the Lord Jesus and the coming of His Kingdom?

What disgrace awaits the unfaithful servant! What dishonor awaits you! If you have been clouds without rain, wells without water, smoking lamps giving no light, fields that yield no harvest, what must be your portion? Let every Esther resolve that she will never bring this ban upon her name! Let every man, woman and even *child* among us, knowing the Lord, feel that the vows of the Lord are upon us and that by imperative necessity we must serve according to our capacity the cause of God and His Truth! If

we should perish through our zeal for the Lord of Hosts, it will be grand, thus, to lose our lives! Thus much for the word, "Listen." May the Spirit of God sanctify your hearts by His Word.

**II.** I change a little and the call is now, "CONSIDER." *Consider to what some of you have been advanced.* You have been raised to salvation! You have been lifted from the dunghill and set among princes! I have uttered the word, "salvation," and what an infinity of goodness lies hidden there! In the music of that word, all sweetnesses meet together! What are the obligations of one elected according to the foreknowledge of God, redeemed by the heart's blood of Christ and quickened by the Holy Spirit? What manner of persons ought we to be? You have been raised to that honor, walk worthy of it!

Besides that, some of you have been raised to a considerable degree of Christian knowledge. You are not mere babes in Grace—you are well instructed and you have had a blessed experience both of trouble and of joy which has made you strong in the Lord—and has confirmed you in the faith and has admitted you into the inner circle where the joy of the Lord is best known. If I had said that you had been elevated to be queens, like Esther, it would have been a poor elevation compared with that which you have actually received! Some of you who are the favorites of Heaven have leaned your head on Christ's bosom and have been permitted to sit where angels would wish to be! You are near and dear to Jesus and espoused to Him in love. In addition to all this, the Lord has raised some of you out of poverty and brought you to comparative wealth, perhaps to positive wealth—and He has given you positions which once you never dreamed of. To this He adds domestic comfort, health and prosperity in all its forms. The Lord has also given you talent. I fear we have, all of us, more ability than we use—but some have more talent than they, themselves, are aware of—and this, perhaps, they display in *business*, but never in the cause of God!

Thus you are brought to the Kingdom of God, but why is it so? I want you to consider *why the Lord has brought you where you are.* Do you think that He has done it for your own sake? Does He intend all this merely that you may practice self-indulgence? Can this be the design of God? Do not think so! Has He done all this merely to give you pleasure? Not so! God's work is like a net of many meshes and these are all connected with each other. We are links of the same chain and cannot move without moving others. We are members of one body and God acts towards us with that fact in view. He does not bless the hand for the hand's sake, but for the sake of the whole body! Well then, dear Friend, you are saved that *you may save!* You are taught that *you may teach!* You are confirmed in the faith that *you may confirm others!* Talents are allotted to you that you may turn them over and bring in heavenly usury for your Lord! Whatever you have is not yours to hoard for yourself, or to spend upon yourself, but that you may use it as a good steward of God! Who knows whether you are come to the kingdom which God has given you for such a time as this, when there is need of you and all that you have?

Consider, next, *at what a time it is that you have been thus advanced.* You have been instructed in the faith in a time when unbelief is rampant.

Why? You have been confirmed in full assurance at a time when many are weak and trembling. Why? You have been entrusted with talent in a time when multitudes are perishing for lack of knowledge. Why? You are found in the Church when valued Brothers and Sisters are dying or moving off. Why is this? You have wealth when many are starving. Why is this? You hold a high position when many master spirits are leading men into infidelity, or ritualism, or communism. Why are you placed where you are? Brother, your inevitable answer must be that God has put you where you are for some good purpose—which purpose must be connected with His own Glory—and with the extension of His Kingdom in the world. If, however, you think it enough to have secured a fortune, let me ask you—Do you think you are the proprietor of what you have amassed, or do you admit that you are a *steward*? If you are a steward, use not the goods entrusted to you for your own ends, but for your Master's, for if you do not, you are a thief! Whenever a steward considers that the estate is his own property and not his master's, he is a thief and, before long, his master will deal with him and say, "Give an account of your stewardship; for you may be no longer steward."

Consider also, I pray you, *under what very special circumstances you have come where you are*. To you as an individual I distinctly speak, and to no one else. It was a very strange thing that Esther, who was the foster child of Mordecai, a humble Jew, should rise from lowly rank to be the queen of Persia! Out of all the women gathered from every province, how amazing that *she* should be chosen to be queen! Special Providence selected the Jewish maiden for the throne! The same is true of each one of us now occupying a post of usefulness. David was taken from the sheepfolds—from following the ewes great with young—that he might be the shepherd of God's people, Israel. I am marveling to find myself where I now am—are not you? How came you into your present pastorate, my dear Brother in the ministry? How did you gain that comfortable position which you now occupy in society? How came you, even, to be in the Church of God? Oh, if anybody had told yonder Brother, a few years ago, that he would be here, he would have sworn at them! But here he is, sitting at the feet of Jesus, charmed to be His disciple!

Now, consider what a wonder of Grace you are, what a singular favor it is that you are where you are! Should not these remarkable dealings of the Lord towards you bind you to the Divine service? Many a man of business here, today, obtaining a satisfactory livelihood, has, a dozen times, been within an inch of bankruptcy and yet he has obtained help and passed the rock in safety. Some of you have been well-near ruined several times—and yet you still have bread to eat and clothes to put on. It is a miracle in your eyes that you have not come to beggary! Let your special deliverances and memorable mercies be as the tongue of persuasion, calling you to grateful service. Consider how great things the Lord has done for you and let us not have to say, "Many times did He deliver them, but they soon forget His works. They understood not His wonders in Egypt. They remembered not the multitude of His mercies."

Then I beg you to consider, once more, *with what singular personal adaptations you are endowed for the work to which God has called you*. I be-



lieve you are endowed with special capacity for a certain work, so that no one is so fit for it as yourself—you are a key to a lock which no other key will fit so well. God has prepared you for the work for which you are appointed. Is it not written—“Also unto you, O Lord, belongs mercy: for You to render every man according to his work”? Each laborer for the Lord has his proper tools found for him. God does not, like Pharaoh, require us to make bricks without straw, nor to fight without weapons, nor to build without a trowel! The Lord provides lamps, oil and wedding garments for all who are called to the Bridegroom's midnight banquet. You, my Brother, are equipped for such work as the Lord has appointed you—will you not at once get to your post?

You say, “If I could preach, I would do it gladly.” You would not preach worthily unless you are, even now, prepared to do other service for which you are fitted. You would be a disgrace to the pulpit if you are useless in the home circle. If God entrusts you with a single talent and you do not use it, neither would you use 10 talents, for he that is unfaithful in that which is least, would be unfaithful in that which is greatest. “But,” says one, “I can hardly get out to public worship! I am a mother shut in at home with five or six little children.” To you there is a little kingdom in your own household. No one can bring up those little ones for the Lord as well as you can. Your influence over them is as strong as it is tender. Now, do not say, “Because I am not allowed to be a preaching woman, therefore I will not attend to the lowly care of my children.” It is far better to train a little family for Jesus than to be attempting a work to which you are *not called*. Let each one of you feel that he has come to his own little kingdom for such a time as this. You and your work fit each other—God has joined you together—let no man put you asunder.

Ask for more power from the Holy Spirit and if there happens to be a tool which the Lord intends for you which hangs a little higher than your present reach, get the ladder of earnest endeavor and you will soon attain to it! Consider how you can improve yourself. Give yourself to reading; study Scripture more and use all helps towards increased knowledge and efficiency. If a further qualification is within your reach, be eager for it, and even the reaching after it may be as great a blessing to you as the talent itself!

**III.** Thirdly, ASPIRE. “Who knows whether you are come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” Rise to the utmost possible height. Fulfill your calling to its loftiest degree. Not only do all that you are *sure* you can do, but aim at something which, as yet, is high up among the questions. Say to yourself, “Who knows?” That is what the ambitious man says when he aspires to be great. When Louis Napoleon was shut up in the fortress of Ham and everybody ridiculed his foolish attempts upon France, yet he said to himself, “Who knows? I am the nephew of my uncle, and may yet sit upon the imperial throne.” And he did before many years had passed. I have no desire to make any man ambitious after the poor thrones, honors and riches of this world, but I would gladly make you all ardently ambitious to honor God and bless men! Who knows? Does anybody know what God may do by you? Does anybody know what capacities slumber within your bosom? I suggest the enquiry and I will help you to an answer.

“Who knows whether you are come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” *Nobody knows to the contrary.* I cannot tell but what God may bless you to this entire nation. Nobody will dare to say that He cannot! I cannot tell but what God may bless you, my Friend, to that part of London in which you live, even though you may be deeply conscious of its great needs and of your own insufficiency. Who can tell what the Lord can or will do? Dear mother, who knows but what the Lord Jesus may bless you to all the members of your family, so that by your means all the little ones shall come to Him? Nobody has any right to speak to the contrary! Who knows but what God may bless you, dear teacher, to all your Sunday school class, so that you may meet them all in Heaven? Nobody can declare that it shall not be so, therefore strive after it. The watchword is, “ASPIRE.”

Further, *nobody knows the limit of the possibilities that surround any man—should God please to use him.* “Alas,” cries one, “I am soon at the end of my powers.” My dear Brother, if you begin calculating how much there is in you by nature and how much you can do of yourself, you may as well end the enquiry by hearing our Lord’s Words—“Without Me you can do nothing.” Though you are no better than a mere cipher, yet the Lord can make something of you. Set one before a cipher and it is 10, directly. Let two or three nothings combine to serve the Lord and, if the Lord Jesus heads them, these nothings become tens of thousands! Who knows what you can do? Shall the Church ever say, “Here is a problem we cannot solve?” Bite your lip through rather than have it *thought* that you doubt the power of the Almighty! All things are possible to Him that believes! You are able to take the land into possession, the Lord being your Helper. Go up against even these entrenched Canaanites, the walls of whose cities reach to Heaven, for you can drive them out!

You seem, in your own sight, to be as grasshoppers when compared with the sons of Anak. But the Lord on high is mighty and out of the weakest things He has ordained strength to His honor and glory! Young man, I trust you have given your heart to the Lord—what are you going to do? You have come into some property unexpectedly, or you are promoted in a house of business—what is the meaning of it? “Who knows whether you are come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” My talented Brother, should you not take your share in battling with present evils? I believe that in dark times God is making lamps with which to remove the gloom. Martin Luther is sitting by his father’s hearth in the forest when the Pope is selling his wicked indulgences—Martin will soon come out and stop the crowing of the cock of the Romish Christ-denying Peter!

John Calvin is quietly studying when false doctrine is most rife and he will be heard of at Geneva! A young man is here this morning—I do not know whereabouts he is, but I pray the Lord to make this to be an ordination sermon to him—starting him on his life-work. I feel as if I were Samuel at Bethlehem, seeking for David, to anoint him with a horn of oil in the name of the Lord! Some beloved Brothers are here who have done a good deal and the Lord has blessed them, but their work is heavy and their hearts are weary. By the anointing which has given you the kingdom, I trust that you will not be weary in well-doing! Pluck up courage, for

a grand future is before you! “Who knows whether you are come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” Be content to be a living sacrifice. Say with Esther, “If I perish, I perish. I am content to give myself up for such a cause. Come life, come death, I am all His! If I die in my Lord’s work, I die content.”

Further, “Who knows whether you are come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” *You do not, yourself, know.* I speak experimentally, using myself as an instance in the work which God has enabled me to do. If it had been revealed to me that I should have enjoyed the opportunities which have fallen to my lot, I would never have believed it. If the Lord can use *me*, He can also use you! Only stand in a waiting posture, saying, “Here am I, send me!” and you shall see things which you dare not expect! If the curtain could be drawn and you could behold the future, you would exclaim, “Is Your servant born of angels that he should attempt such things as these?” I do not suppose Peter, James and John had any inkling of what the Lord was going to do by them when they left their boats and nets at His call. John dreamed that one day he might sit on an earthly throne and, his brother, James, on another. Though this was not to be, yet they have obtained a nobler heritage!

To each of us there is a share in the purposes of Heaven and this is a large enough kingdom! Who knows, Brother or Sister, whether you are put in your family to save your family? Who knows whether you are made to live in a back street to bless that street? Who knows whether you are set down in a forlorn district to raise up that district? Who knows whether you are put into that nation to save that nation? Yes, put into the world, in Christ’s name, to save the world? Aspire to great things for God!

**IV.** Our fourth word is—CONFIDENCE. “Who knows whether you are come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” If you are come to the kingdom for such a time as this, *be confident that you are safe.* If God has brought Esther to the throne that she may go in unto the king and save her people—go in, good Esther! Fear not the risk. Fast and pray your three days before you go, but be not dismayed! If the womanhood in you trembles in the prospect of a possible death, let confidence in God override your fears! Ahasuerus cannot kill you! You cannot die! He can refuse his golden scepter to all the princes of the empire, but not to *you*—for God has placed you where you are and ordained you for His purpose! Rest assured if He had meant to destroy you, He would not have shown you such things as these. Fall back on His past mercy and be confident!

What is more, if God has a purpose to serve by a man, that man will live out his day and *accomplish the Divine design.* The more resistance he experiences, the more surely will his life-work be achieved. If all the devils in Hell rose up at once against a true, devoted servant of God who has a work to do—in the name of the Lord he would drive them away as smoke before the wind! David said, “They compass me about like bees, yes, they compass me about; but in the name of the Lord will I destroy them.” It is a bad day for anybody when he opposes himself to the manifest destiny of one of the Lord’s commissioned ones! I fall back often on the grand Truth of God of Predestination—it is no sleepy doctrine to me! If God’s decree so

runs, there is no altering, it! And if He has purposed it, there is no defeating it! Heaven and earth shall sooner fail than the eternal purpose!

Each chosen servant of God is like the Word which called him—as the Word of the Lord does not return unto Him void, but prospers in the thing of which He has sent it, even so shall it be with every servant of the Most High! A holy confidence in the Divine purpose, instead of making men grow stolid and idle, may prove to be one of the mightiest impulses to the heroic life. Cromwell's Ironsides, to a man, believed in the everlasting purpose, therefore they were invincible, for no fear ever breathed upon them! Though the hosts of the tyrant may be innumerable, yet with the war cry, "The Lord of Hosts is with us," we will ride forth conquering and to conquer! Settle it in your mind that the Lord has called you to the work and then advance without question or fear. Put your hand to the plow and pause not. Do the work with all your might.

Do not stand asking *how*—do it as if you can! Do not stand asking *when*—do it now! Do not say, "But I am weak"—the Lord is strong! Do not say, "But I must devise methods." Do not concoct schemes or tarry to perfect your methods—fling yourself upon the work with all your might! Load your cannon with rough bits of rock or stones from the road if nothing better comes to hand. Ram them in with plenty of powder and apply the fire. When you have nothing else to hurl at the foe, place *yourself* in the gun! Believe me, no shot will be more effectual than the hurling of your whole being into the conflict.

There was a man who strove, in the House of Commons, for what he thought would be a great blessing to seamen, but he could not prevail. At last he broke through all the rules of the House and acted like a fanatic—and when everybody saw that the man was so in earnest that he was ready to faint and die, they said, "We must do something"—and it was done! An enthusiasm which overpowers yourself is likely to overpower others. Do not fail from lack of fervor! Never mind if men think you are crazy. When you are overwhelmed, yourself, the flood of zeal will bear all opposition before it. When you become so fanatically insane as to be absorbed by a passion for the Glory of God, the salvation of men, the spread of the Truth and the reclaiming of the fallen masses—there shall be about you the truest sanity and the mightiest force!

May you feel such a passion concerning missions! May you feel that the Gospel must be preached to all nations! May you feel that impulse, at this moment, while we worship God by giving our contributions to His cause.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—**

***Esther 4; Psalm 116:12-19.***

**HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—972, 663, 116 (PART II).**

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# PROVIDENCE—AS SEEN IN THE BOOK OF ESTHER NO. 1201

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 1, 1874,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews  
had rule over them that hated them.”  
Esther 9:1.*

YOU are probably aware that some persons have denied the Inspiration of the Book of Esther because the name of God does not occur in it. They might, with equal justice, deny the Inspiration of a great number of chapters in the Bible, and of a far greater number of verses. Although the name of God does not occur in the Book of Esther, the Lord Himself is there most conspicuously in every incident which it relates. I have seen portraits bearing the names of persons for whom they were intended, and they certainly needed them, but we have all seen others which required no name because they were such striking likenesses that the moment you looked upon them you knew them.

In the Book of Esther, as much as in any other part of the Word of God, and I had almost committed myself by saying—more than anywhere else—the hand of Providence is manifestly to be seen. To condense the whole of the story of the Book of Esther into one sermon would be impossible and, therefore, I must rely upon your previous acquaintance with it. I must also ask your patience if there should be more of history in the sermon than is usual with me. All Scripture is given by Inspiration and is profitable, whether it is history or doctrine. God never meant the Book of Esther to lie dumb—whatever it seemed good to Him to teach us by it, it ought to be our earnest endeavor to learn.

The Lord intended, by the narrative of Esther's history, to set before us a wonderful instance of His Providence, so that when we had viewed it with interest and pleasure, we might praise His name and then go on to acquire the habit of observing His hand in *other* histories, and especially in our own lives. Well does Flavel say that he who observes Providence will never be long without a Providence to observe. The man who can walk through the world and see no God is said upon Inspired authority to be a fool—but the wise man's eyes are in his head—he sees with an inner sight and discovers God everywhere! It is his joy to perceive that the Lord is working according to His will in Heaven, earth and in all deep places.

It has pleased God at different times in history to startle the heathen world into a conviction of His Presence. He had a chosen people to whom He committed the true light—and to these He revealed Himself continually. The rest of the world was left in darkness, but every now and then the Divine Glory flamed through the gloom as the lightening pierces

the blackness of storms. Some, by that sudden light, were led to seek after God and found Him. Others were rendered uneasy and without excuse, though they continued in their blind idolatry. The wonderful destruction of Pharaoh and his armies at the Red Sea was a burst of light which startled the midnight of the world by giving proof to mankind that the Lord lived and could accomplish His purposes by suspending the laws of Nature and working miracles.

The marvelous drama enacted at Shushan, the capital of Persia, was intended to be another manifestation of the Being and Glory of God, working not as formerly, by a miracle, but in the usual methods of His Providence and yet accomplishing all His designs. It has been well said that the Book of Esther is a record of wonders without a miracle and, therefore, though equally revealing the Glory of the Lord, it sets it forth in another fashion from that which is displayed in the overthrow of Pharaoh by miraculous power.

Let us come now to the story. There were two races, one of which God had blessed and promised to preserve, and another of which He had said that He would utterly put out the remembrance of it from under Heaven. Israel was to be blessed and made a blessing, but of Amalek the Lord had sworn that, "The Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." These two peoples were, therefore, in deadly hostility—like the Seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent—between whom the Lord, Himself, has put at enmity. Many years had rolled away. The chosen people were in great distress and at this time there still existed upon the face of the earth some relics of the race of Amalek.

Among them was one descended of the royal line of Agag, whose name was Haman. He was in supreme power at the court of Ahasuerus, the Persian monarch. Now it was God's intent that a last conflict should take place between Israel and Amalek—the conflict which began with Joshua in the desert was to be finished by Mordecai in the king's palace. This last struggle began with great disadvantage to God's people. Haman was prime minister of the far-extending empire of Persia, the favorite of a despotic monarch who was pliant to his will. Mordecai, a Jew in the employment of the king, sat in the king's gate. When he saw proud Haman go to and fro, he refused to pay him the homage which others rendered insincerely.

He would not bow his head or bend his knee to him, and this exceedingly galled Haman. It came into his mind that this Mordecai was of the seed of the Jews—and with the remembrance came the high ambition to avenge the quarrel of his race. He thought it scorn to touch only one man and resolved that in himself he would incarnate all the hate of generations—and at one blow sweep the accursed Jews, as he thought them—from off the face of the earth! He went to the king, with whom his word was power, and told him that there was a singular people scattered up and down the Persian empire, different from all others, who opposed the king's laws and that it was not for the king's profit to let them live.

He asked that they might all be destroyed—and he would pay into the king's treasury an enormous sum of money to compensate for any loss of

revenue by their destruction. He intended that the spoil which would be taken from the Jews should tempt their neighbors to kill them and that the part allotted to himself should repay the amount which he advanced, thus he would make the Jews pay for their own murder! He had no sooner asked for this horrible grant than the monarch conceded it. Taking his signet ring from off his finger, he bade Haman do with the Jews as seemed good to him. Thus the chosen seed were in the hands of the Agagite who thirsted to annihilate them.

Only one thing stands in the way. The Lord has said, “No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue that rises against you in judgment you shall condemn.” We shall see what happens, and learn from it.

**I.** First, we shall learn from the narrative that GOD PLACES HIS AGENTS IN FIT PLACES FOR DOING HIS WORK. The Lord was not taken by surprise by this plot of Haman. He had foreseen it and forestalled it. It was necessary, in order to match this cunning, malicious design of Haman, that someone of the Jewish race should possess great influence with the king. How was this to be effected?

Should a Jewess become Queen of Persia, the power she would possess would be useful in counteracting the enemy’s design. This had been all arranged years before Haman had concocted in his wicked heart the scheme of murdering the Jews. Esther, whose sweet name signifies myrtle, had been elevated to the position of Queen of Persia by a singular course of events. It happened that Ahasuerus, at a certain drinking bout, was so far gone with wine as to forget all the proprieties of eastern life. He sent for his queen, Vashti, to exhibit herself to the people and the princes. No one dreamed, in those days, of disobeying the tyrant’s word and, therefore, all stood aghast when Vashti, evidently a woman of right royal spirit, refused to degrade herself by being made a spectacle before that ribald rout of drinking princes. She refused to come.

For her courage Vashti was divorced and a new queen was sought. We cannot commend Mordecai for putting his adopted daughter in competition for the monarch’s choice—it was contrary to the Law of God and dangerous to her soul in the highest degree. It would have been better for Esther to have been the wife of the poorest man of the house of Israel than to have gone into the den of the Persian despot. The Scripture does not excuse, much less commend, the wrong doing of Esther and Mordecai in thus acting, but simply tells us how Divine Wisdom brought good out of evil, even as the chemist distils healing drugs from poisonous plants.

The high position of Esther, though gained contrary to the wisest of laws, was overruled for the best interests of her people. Esther, in the king’s house, was the means of defeating the malicious adversary. But Esther alone would not suffice. She is shut up in the harem, surrounded by her chamberlains and her maids of honor, but quite secluded from the outside world. A watchman was needed *outside* the palace to guard the people of the Lord and to urge Esther to action when help is needed. Mordecai, her cousin and foster father, obtained an office which placed him at the palace gate. Where could he be better posted? He is where

much of the royal business will come under his eye and he is both quick, courageous and unflinching.

Never had Israel a better sentinel than Mordecai, the son of Kish, a Benjamite—a very different man from that other son of Kish who had suffered Amalek to escape in former times! His relationship to the queen allowed him to communicate with her through Hatach, her chamberlain. When Haman's evil decree was published, it was not long before intelligence of it reached her ear and she felt the danger to which Mordecai and all her people were exposed. By singular Providences did the Lord place those two most efficient instruments in their places. Mordecai would have been of little use without Esther—and Esther could have rendered no aid had it not been for Mordecai. Meanwhile, there is a conspiracy hatched against the king which Mordecai discovers and communicates to the highest authority—and so puts the king under obligation to him—which was a necessary part of the Lord's plan.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, whatever mischief may be brewing against the cause of God and Truth, and I dare say there is very much going on at this moment, for neither the devil, nor the Jesuits, nor the atheists are long quiet—this we are sure of—the Lord knows all about it and He has His Esther and His Mordecai ready at their posts to frustrate their designs! The Lord has His men well placed and His ambushes hidden in their coverts to surprise His foes. We need never be afraid but what the Lord has forestalled His enemies and provided against their mischief. Every child of God is where God has placed Him for some purpose. The practical use of this first point is to lead you to inquire for what practical purpose has God placed each one of you where you now are.

You have been wishing for another position where you could do something for Jesus—do not wish anything of the kind, but serve Him where you are! If you are sitting at the King's gate, there is something for you to do there. And if you were on the queen's throne, there would be something for you to do there. Do not ask either to be gatekeeper or queen, but whichever you are, serve God in that position! Brother, are you rich? God has made you a steward—take care that you are a good steward. Brother, are you poor? God has thrown you into a position where you will be the better able to give a word of sympathy to poor saints. Are you doing your allotted work? Do you live in a godly family? God has a motive for placing you in so happy a position. Are you in an ungodly house? You are a lamp hung up in a dark place—mind you, shine there!

Esther did well because she acted as an Esther should. And Mordecai did well because he acted as a Mordecai should. I like to think, as I look over you all, that God has put each one of you in the right place, even as a good captain well arranges the different parts of his army. And though we do not know His plan of battle, it will be seen during the conflict that He has placed each soldier where he should be. Our wisdom is not to desire another place, nor to judge those who are in another position, but each one, being redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus, should consecrate himself fully to the Lord, and say, "Lord, what would You have me to do, for here I am, and by Your Grace I am ready to do it."



Forget not, then, the fact that God, in His Providence, places His servants in positions where He can make use of them!

**II.** Secondly, the Lord not only arranges His servants, but HE RESTRAINS HIS ENEMIES. I would call your attention, particularly, to the fact that Haman, having gained a decree for the destruction of all the Jews upon a certain day, was very anxious to have his cruel work done thoroughly and, therefore, being very superstitious and believing in astrology, he bade his magicians cast lots that he might find a lucky day for his great undertaking. The lots were cast for the various months, but not a single fortunate day could be found till hard by the close of the year—and then the chosen day was the 13<sup>th</sup> of the 12<sup>th</sup> month.

On that day the magicians told their dupe that the heavens would be propitious and the star of Haman would be in the ascendant! Truly the lot was cast into the lap, but the disposal of it was of the Lord! See you not that there were 11 whole months left before the Jews would be put to death—and that would give Mordecai and Esther time to turn round—and if anything could be done to reverse the cruel decree they had space to do it! Suppose that the lot had fallen on the second or third month—the swift dromedaries and camels and messengers would scarcely have been able to reach the extremity of the Persian dominions—certainly a second set of messengers to counteract the decree could not have done so and, humanly speaking, the Jews could have been destroyed!

But oh, in that secret council chamber where sit the sorcerers and the man who asks counsel at the hands of the infernal powers, the Lord Himself is present, frustrating the tokens of the liars and making diviners mad! Vain were their enchantments and the multitude of their sorceries! The astrologers, the star-gazers and the monthly prognosticators were all fools, together, and led the superstitious Haman to destruction. “Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, nor divination against Israel.” Trust in the Lord, you righteous, and in patience possess your souls. Leave your adversaries in the hands of God, for He can make them fall into the snare which they have privately laid for you!

Notice attentively that Haman selected a mode of destroying the Jews which was wonderfully overruled for their preservation. They were to be slain by any of the people among whom they lived who chose to do so—and their plunder was to reward their slayers. Now, this was a very cunning device, for greed would naturally incite the baser sort of men to murder the thrifty Jews and, no doubt, there were debtors who would also be glad to see their creditors disposed of! But see the loophole for escape which this afforded! If the decree had enacted that the Jews should be slain by the *soldiers* of the Persian empire, it would have been done, and it is not easy to see how the Jews could have escaped. But, the matter being left in *private* hands, the subsequent decree that they might *defend* themselves, was a sufficient counteraction of the first edict. Thus the Lord arranged that the wisdom of Haman should turn out to be folly, after all!

In another point, also, we mark the restraining hand of God—namely, that Mordecai, though he had provoked Haman to the utmost, was not

put to death at once. Haman “refrained himself.” Why did he do so? Proud men are usually in a mighty tiff if they consider themselves insulted, and are ready, at once, to take revenge. But Haman “refrained himself” until that day in which his anger burned furiously. Then he set up the gallows. But until then he smothered his passion. I marvel at this! It shows how God makes the wrath of man to praise Him and the remainder He does restrain. Mordecai must not die a violent death by Haman’s hands.

The enemies of the Church of God and of His people can never do more than the Lord permits—they cannot go a hair’s breadth beyond the Divine license! And when they are permitted to do their worst, there is always some weak point about all that they do—some extreme folly which renders their fury vain. The wicked carry about them the weapons of their own destruction—and when they rage most against the Most High, the Lord of All brings out of it good for His people and Glory to Himself! Judge not Providence in little pieces—it is a grand mosaic—and must be seen as a whole! Say not of any one hour, “This is dark”—it may be so, but that darkness will minister to the light, even as the ebony gloom of midnight makes the stars appear the more bright!

Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength. His wisdom will undermine the mines of cunning. His skill will overtop the climbings of craft! “He takes the wise in their own craftiness and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong.”

**III.** Next we will notice that God, IN HIS PROVIDENCE, TRIES HIS PEOPLE. You must not suppose that those who are God’s servants will be screened from trial—that is no part of the design of Providence. “If you are without chastisement,” says the Apostle, “then you are bastards and not sons.” God’s intent is to educate His people by *affliction*. We must not, therefore, dream that an event is not Providential because it is grievous! No, you may count it to be all the more so, for, “the Lord tries the righteous.”

Observe that God tried Mordecai. He was a quiet old man, I have no doubt, and it must have been a daily trial to him to stand erect, or to sit in his place when that proud peer of the realm went strutting by. His fellow servants told him that the King had commanded all men to pay homage to Haman, but he held his own, not, however, without knowing what it might cost him to be so sternly independent. Haman was an Amalekite—and the Jew would not bow before him. But what a trouble it must have been to the heart of Mordecai, when he saw the proclamation that all the Jews must die! The good man must have bitterly lamented his unhappy fate in being the innocent cause of the destruction of his nation!

“Perhaps,” he thought within himself, “I have been too obstinate. Woe is me! My whole house and my whole people are to be slain because of what I have done!” He put on sackcloth and cast ashes on his head. And he was full of sorrow—a sorrow which we can hardly realize—for even if you know you have done right, yet if you bring down trouble, and especially destruction, upon the heads of others, it cuts you to the quick.

You could bear martyrdom for *yourself*, but it is sad to see others suffer through your firmness.

Esther, also, had to be tried. Amid the glitter of the Persian court she might have grown forgetful of her God. But the sad news comes to her, “Your cousin and your nation are to be destroyed.” Sorrow and dread filled her heart. There was no hope for her people unless she would go in unto the king—that despot from whom one angry look would be death. She must risk all and go unbidden into his presence and plead for her nation. Do you wonder that she trembled? Do you marvel that she asked the prayers of the faithful? Are you surprised to see both herself and her maids of honor fasting and lamenting before God?

Do not think, my prosperous Friend, that the Lord has given you a high place that you may escape the trials which belong to all His people—yours is no position of ease, but one of the hottest parts of the battle! Neither the lowest and most quiet position, nor the most public and exposed condition will enable you to escape the “much tribulation” through which the Church Militant must fight its way to Glory. Why should we wish it? Should not the gold be tested in the crucible? Should not the strong pillar sustain great weights? When the Menai bridge was first flung across the straits, the engineer did not stipulate that his tube should never be tried with great weights! On the contrary, I can imagine his saying, “Bring up your heaviest trains and load the bridge as much as ever you will, for it will bear every strain.”

The Lord tries the righteous because He has made them of metal which will endure the test—and He knows that by the sustaining power of His Holy Spirit they will be held up and made more than conquerors! Therefore is it a part of the operation of Providence to try the saints. Let that comfort those of you who are in trouble at this time.

**IV.** But we must pass on to note, fourthly, that THE LORD’S WISDOM IS SEEN IN ARRANGING THE SMALLEST EVENTS SO AS TO PRODUCE GREAT RESULTS. We frequently hear persons say of a pleasant or a great event, “What a Providence!” while they are silent as to anything which appears less important, or has an unpleasant savor. But, my Brothers and Sisters, the place of the *shrub* upon the heath is as fixed as the station of a king! And the *dust* which is raised by a chariot wheel is as surely steered by Providence as the planet in its orbit! There is as much Providence in the creeping of an aphid upon a rose leaf as in the marching of an army to ravage a continent. Everything—the most minute as well as the most magnificent—is ordered by the Lord who has prepared His Throne in the heavens, whose kingdom rules over all!

The history before us furnishes proof of this. We have reached the point where Esther is to go in unto the king and plead for her people. Strengthened by prayer, but doubtless, still trembling, Esther entered the inner court and the king’s affection led him, instantly, to stretch out the golden scepter. Being told to ask what she pleases, she invites the king to come to a banquet and bring Haman with him. He comes, and for the second time invites her to ask what she wills to the half of his kingdom. Why, when the king was in so kind a spirit, did not Esther

speak? He was charmed with her beauty and his royal word was given to deny her nothing! Why not speak out?

But no, she merely asks that he and Haman will come to another banquet of wine tomorrow. O, daughter of Abraham, what an opportunity have you lost! Why did you not plead for your people? Their very existence hangs upon your entreaty and the king has said, "What will you?" and yet you are slow to ask! Was it timidity? It is possible. Did she think that Haman stood too high in the king's favor for her to prevail? It would be hard to say. Some of us are very unaccountable, but on that woman's unaccountable silence far more was hanging than appears at first sight! Doubtless she longed to bring out her secret, but the words came not.

God was in it! It was not the right time to speak and, therefore, she was led to put off her disclosure. I dare say she regretted it and wondered when she should be able to come to the point, but the Lord knew best. After that banquet Haman went out joyfully at the palace gate, but being mortified beyond measure by Mordecai's unbending posture, he called for his wife and his friends and told them that his riches and honors availed him nothing so long as Mordecai, the Jew, sat in the king's gate. They might have told him, "You will destroy Mordecai and all his people in a few months, and the man is already fretting himself over the decree. Let him live and be content to watch his miseries and gloat over his despair!"

But no, they counsel speedy revenge! Let Mordecai be *hanged* on a gallows on the top of the house—and let the gallows be set up at once—and let Haman, early in the morning, ask for the Jew's life and let his insolence be punished. Go, call the workmen, and let the gallows be set up at a great height that very night! It seemed a small matter that Haman should be so enraged at just that hour, but it was a very important item in the whole transaction, for had he not been so hasty he would not have gone so early in the morning to the palace. And he would not have been at hand when the king said, "Who is in the court?"

But what has happened? Why, that very night, when Haman was devising to hang Mordecai, the king could not sleep! What caused the monarch's restlessness? Why did it happen on *that* night of all others? Ahasuerus is master of 127 provinces, but not master of 10 minutes' sleep! What shall he do? Shall he call for soothing instruments of music, or beguile the hours with a tale that is told, or with a merry ballad of the minstrel? No, he calls for a *book*. Who would have thought that this luxurious prince must listen to a reader in the dead of night? "Bring a book!" What book? "A volume perfumed with roses, musical with songs, sweet as the notes of the nightingale?" "No, bring the chronicles of the empire." Dull reading, that!

But there are 127 provinces—which volume shall the page bring from the recorder's shelves? He chose the record of Shushan the royal city. That is the center of the empire and its record is lengthy. In which section shall the reader make a beginning? He may begin where he pleases, but he chooses the section which contains the story of the discovery of a conspiracy by Mordecai! The reader settles upon that one of all others! The Jews tell us that he began at another place, but that

the book closed and fell open at the chapter upon Mordecai. Be that as it may, this is certain—the *Lord* knew where the record was and guided the reader to the right page! Speaking after the manner of men, there were a million chances against one that the king of Persia should, in the dead of the night, be reading the chronicle of his own kingdom—and that he should light upon this particular part of it!

But that was not all. The king is interested. He had desired to go to sleep, but that wish is gone and he is in haste to act. He says, “This man, Mordecai, has done me good service. Has he been rewarded?” “No.” Then cries the impulsive monarch, “He shall be rewarded at once! Who is in the court?” It was the most unlikely thing in the world for the luxurious Ahasuerus to be in haste to do justice, for he had done *injustice* thousands of times without remorse—and chiefly on that day when he wantonly signed the death warrant of that very Mordecai and his people! For once the king is intent on being just—and at the door stands Haman—but you know the rest of the story. How he had to lead Mordecai in state through the streets.

It seems a very small matter whether you or I shall sleep tonight or toss restlessly on our beds, but God will be in our rest or in our wakefulness. We know not what His purpose may be, but His hand will be in it! Neither does any man sleep or wake but according to the decree of the Lord. Observe well how this matter prepared the way for the queen at the next banquet. When she unfolded her sorrow and told of the threatened destruction of the Jews—and pointed to that wicked Haman—the king must have been the more interested and ready to grant her request. Especially since the man who had saved his life was a Jew and that he had already awarded the highest honors to Mordecai, fitted, in every way, to supersede his worthless favorite!

All was well. The plotter was unmasked, the gallows ready and he who ordered it was made to try his own arrangements!

**V.** Our next remark is THE LORD, IN HIS PROVIDENCE, CALLS HIS OWN SERVANTS TO BE ACTIVE. This business was done, and well done, by Divine Providence. But those concerned had to *pray* about it. Mordecai and all the Jews outside and in Shushan fasted and cried unto the Lord. Unbelievers inquire, “What difference could prayer make?” My Brethren, prayer is an essential part of the Providence of God. It so essential that you will always find that when God delivers His people, His people have been praying for that deliverance!

They tell us that prayer does not affect the Most High and cannot alter His purposes. We never thought it did, but prayer is a part of the purpose and plan, and a most effective wheel in the machinery of Providence. The Lord sets His people praying and then He blesses them. Moreover, Mordecai was quite sure the Lord would deliver His people, and he expressed that confidence, but he did not, therefore, sit still—he stirred up Esther. And when she seemed a little slack, he put it very strongly—“If you altogether hold your peace at this time, then enlargement and deliverance will arise from another place, but you and your father’s house shall be destroyed.” Nerved by this message, Esther braced herself to the effort. She did not sit still and say, “The Lord will

arrange this business, there is nothing for me to do.” No, she both pleaded with God and ventured her life and all for her people’s sake. And then acted very wisely and discreetly in her interviews with the king.

So, my Brothers and Sisters, we rest confidently in Providence, but we are not idle! We believe that God has an elect people and therefore we preach in the hope that we may be the means, in the hands of His Spirit, of bringing this elect people to Christ. We believe that God has appointed for His people both holiness here and Heaven hereafter. Therefore we strive against sin and press forward to the rest which remains for the people of God. Faith in God’s Providence, instead of repressing our energies, excites us to diligence! We labor as if all depended upon us and then fall back upon the Lord with the calm faith which knows that all depends upon Him.

**VI.** Now we must close our historical review with the remark that in the end THE LORD ACHIEVES THE TOTAL DEFEAT OF HIS FOES AND THE SAFETY OF HIS PEOPLE. Never was a man so utterly defeated as Haman! Never was a project so altogether turned aside. He was taken in his own trap and he and his sons were hanged up on the gallows set up for Mordecai! As for the Jews, they were in this special danger, that they were to be destroyed on a certain day, and though Esther pleaded with the king for their lives, he was not able to alter his decree! Though willing to do so, it was a rule of the constitution that the law of the Medes and Persians could not be altered.

The king might determine what he pleased, but when he had once decreed it, he could not change it—the people feeling it better to submit to the worst established law than to be left utterly to every capricious whim of their master. Now, what was to be done? The decree was given that the Jews might be slain—and it could not be reversed. Here was the door of escape—another decree was issued giving the Jews permission to *defend themselves* and take the property of any who dared to attack them! Thus one decree effectually neutralized the other.

With great haste this mandate was sent all over the kingdom and on the appointed day the Jews stood up for themselves and slew their foes. According to their tradition nobody attempted to attack them except the Amalekites—and consequently, only Amalekites were slain—and the race of Amalek was, on that day, swept from off the face of the earth! God thus gave to the Jews a high position in the empire and we are told that many became Jews, or were proselytes to the God of Abraham because they saw what God had done.

As I commenced by saying that God sometimes darted flashes of light through the thick darkness, you will now see what a flash this must have been. All the people were perplexed when they found that the Hebrews might be put to death, but they must have been far more astonished when the decree came that they might defend themselves! All the world enquired, “Why is this?” And the answer was, “The living God whom the Jews worship has displayed His wisdom and rescued His people.” All nations were compelled to feel that there was a God in Israel and thus the Divine purpose was fully accomplished—His people were secured and His name was glorified to the world’s end!

From the whole we learn the following lessons. First, it is clear that *the Divine will is accomplished, and yet men are perfectly free agents*. Haman acted according to his own will. Ahasuerus did whatever he pleased. Mordecai behaved as his heart moved him. And so did Esther. We see no interference with them, no force or coercion. Therefore the entire sin and responsibility rest with each guilty one, yet, acting with perfect freedom, none of them acts otherwise than Divine Providence had foreseen. “I cannot understand it,” says one. My dear Friend, I am compelled to say the same—I do not understand it, either! I have known many who think they comprehend all things, but I fancy they had a higher opinion of themselves than truth would endorse.

Certain of my brethren deny free agency and so get out of the difficulty. Others assert that there is no predestination, and so cut the knot. As I do not wish to get out of the difficulty and have no wish to shut my eyes to any part of the Truth of God, I believe both free agency and predestination to be facts. How they can be made to agree, I do not know, or care to know! I am satisfied to know anything which God chooses to reveal to me—and equally content *not* to know what He does not reveal. There it is. Man is a free agent in what he does, responsible for his actions, and verily guilty when he does wrong. And he will be justly punished, too! And if he is lost, the blame will rest with only himself. But yet there is One who rules over all, who, without complicity in their sin, makes even the actions of wicked men to subserve His holy and righteous purposes. Believe these two Truths of God and you will see them in practical agreement in daily life, though you will not be able to devise a theory for harmonizing them on paper.

Next, we learn *what wonders can be worked without miracles*. When God does a wonderful thing by suspending the laws of Nature, men are greatly astonished, and say, “This is the finger of God.” But nowadays they say to us, “Where is your God? He never suspends His laws, now!” I see God in the history of Pharaoh, but I must confess I see Him quite as clearly in the history of Haman. And I think I see Him in even a grander light, for, (I say it with reverence to His holy name), it is a somewhat rough method of accomplishing a purpose to stop the wheels of Nature and reverse wise and admirable laws. Certainly it reveals His power, but it does not so clearly display His Immutability.

When, however, the Lord allows everything to go on in the usual way, and gives mind and thought, ambition and passion their full liberty—and yet achieves His purpose—it is doubly wonderful! In the miracles of Pharaoh we see the finger of God, but in the wonders of Providence, without miracles, we see the *hand* of God. Today, whatever the event may be, whether it is the war between the Germans and the French, or the march into Coomassie, or the change of our own government, the attentive eye will as clearly see the Lord as if by miraculous power the hills had leaped from their places, or the floods had stood upright in a heap! I am sure that God is in the world, yes, and is at my own fireside and in my chamber. And I am sure He manages my affairs and orders all things for me, and for each one of His children. We need no miracles to

convince us of His working. The wonders of His Providence are as great marvels as miracles themselves.

Next we learn *how safe the Church of God is*. At one time the people of God seemed to be altogether in Haman's power. Nero once said that he wished his enemies had but one neck that he might destroy them all at a blow. Haman seemed to have realized just such power. Yet the chosen nation was delivered, the Jewish people lived on until the Messiah came, and does exist, and will exist till they shall enjoy the bright future which is decreed for them. So is it with the Church of God today. The foes of the Truth of God can never put out the candle which God has lit. They can never crush the living seed which the Lord Jesus has sown in His own blood-bought people. Brethren, be not afraid, but establish your hearts in God!

Again, we see that *the wicked will surely come to an ill end*. They may be very powerful, but God will bring them down. They may be very crafty and may plot and plan, and may think that even God, Himself, is their accomplice because everything goes as they desire. But they may be sure their sin will find them out. They may dig deep as Hell, but God will undermine them. They may climb as high as the stars, but God will be above them to hurl them down. Wicked man, I charge you, if you are wise, to turn from your career of opposition to the Most High! You cannot stand against Him—neither can you outwit Him. Cease, I beseech you, from this idle opposition, and hear the voice of His Gospel which says, "Confess your sin and forsake it. Believe in Jesus, the Son of God, the great atoning Sacrifice, and even you shall yet be saved." If you do not so, upon your own head shall your iniquities fall!

Last of all, let each child of God rejoice that *we have a guardian so near the Throne*. Every Jew in Shushan must have felt hope when he remembered that the *queen* was a Jewess. Today let us be glad that Jesus is exalted—

***"He is at the Father's side,  
The Man of Love, the Crucified."***

How safe are all His people, for, "if any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." There is one that lies in the bosom of God who will plead for all those who put their trust in Him! Therefore be you not dismayed, but let your souls rest in God and wait patiently for Him—for sooner shall Heaven and earth pass away than those who trust the Lord perish! "They shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end." Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Esther 5:9-14; 6, 7.***

**HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—251, 210, 207.**

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