

## **Hanged by your Own Handiwork**

(Esther 6:12 – 7:10)

(preached 2/4/15; Pine Grove BC Wed PM)

### **Introduction**

At the end of the summer of 1985, the New Orleans Recreation Department threw a party.

For the first time in many years, no one had drowned in the city's numerous public swimming pools.

So, a party was organized for the 200 lifeguards that the city employed and they were all invited to a party at one of the city's pools.

As the party was ending, some of the staff noticed a dark colored object in the deep end of the pool.

Upon further inspection, it was the body of Jerome Moody, who had been a guest at the party.

Though no one knows exactly how it happened, Moody had fallen into the pool sometime during the party and drowned.

At a year-end party held to celebrate no one drowning, a man drowned with a huge group of lifeguards surrounding him.

Though it was tragic, that is a great example of irony.

Irony is when the opposite of what is expected happens.

No one would expect a man to drown at a pool where 200 lifeguards were present...

To celebrate the fact that nobody had drowned under their watch the whole summer...

YET...that is exactly what happened.

The Bible has examples of irony on its pages as well.

In Exodus 1:22, Pharaoh commanded that all the newborn boys be drowned in the Nile River...

Yet, in Exodus 14, it was Pharaoh and his army who were drowned when the Red Sea caved in on them.

Saul watched while Stephen was stoned for being a Christian, yet after he became Paul, he was also stoned for his faith.

Well, the greatest example of this may occur in the passage that we are going to look at in the book of Esther.

One day, Haman is building a gallows to hang Mordecai, but the next day, he is the one who will hang from it.

That is very ironic, yet that is exactly what happens in chapters 6 and 7 tonight.

As we look at these verses tonight, what should we learn?

What is overriding truth that we need to see and apply to our lives in these chapters?

Here's a suggestion.

Never underestimate the timing of God's sovereignty.

Usually we look at God's sovereignty in the Bible, and we have been taught that God moves at his own pace in the affairs of the world.

And that is entirely true.

However, most of the time we usually assumes that God moves slower than we would like.

I have certainly taught that, and I think there are times when that is true.

God doesn't move as quickly as we would like.

We have even witnesses that in the book of Esther, where Mordecai did not get honored until 5 years after his act of bravery and loyalty.

But as I have studied this passage and thought about it, I think it is equally important to see that God can and at times move very quickly in the world.

One day passes in the book of Esther and Mordecai is going from a great honor to a great hanging.

There are also examples in the Scriptures of where God moves quickly.

In fact, the first things he did in the world went very quickly as he created the world out of nothing in 6 days.

In one night, Israel goes from slavery to freedom in their exodus from Egypt.

In one night, Peter goes from a follower to a denier of Christ.

In one sermon in the book of Acts, the church grows by 3000 souls.

And I say all that to say this...

Pray for God to move quick if you need that in your life.

Be encouraged in the worst of trials that God can change everything in the blink of an eye.

We need to know that all hope is not lost even in the worst of situations.

God can and does move quickly at times in the lives of His people.

That doesn't mean that we command God to act or even expect him to act.

Who are we as pots trying to tell the potter what to do?

But that does mean we can pray for quick action because we know that God is capable.

So, let's look at the end of chapter 6 tonight as well as all of chapter 7 in this rapidly moving drama.

As we come to chapter 6 verse 12, let me refresh our minds of what is happening.

The events of Esther take place during the Persian Empire of the 400 or so BC.

Israel had been taken by the Babylonians, but when the Persians defeated the Babylonians,....

The Jews were allowed to return to their homeland, and many headed back to Jerusalem to help rebuild the temple.

Yet, some remained closer to the center of the Persian kingdom near the capital in Susa.

And two of those that remained behind were Mordecai and his cousin Esther.

Esther had been orphaned as a child and Mordecai raised her as his own.

Yet, for some reason that becomes more obvious as the book of Esther progresses, they decide to stay in the heart of the Persian empire at Susa.

The king of the Persians was Ahasuerus and his queen was Vashti..

Yet when the book opens, Vashti's crown is taken from her as she refuses to dance at the king's party.

This leads to a pageant that Esther wins when God works in the heart of the king.

She takes the crown but trouble comes when a man named Haman wants to kill all the Jews of the empire.

Mordecai talks his cousin Esttther into going before the king to beg for the lives of her people.

And last week, we watched Esther go before the king, even though a law allowed the king to kill her if he desired.

We saw last week that he showed her grace and even asked her what she wanted.

But Esther did not tell him at first.

She simply invited him and Haman, who second in charge, to a banquet.

The king honored her request and went to her party with Haman.

At this banquet, the king again asked her what she wanted, but once again, she hesitated and simply invited him and Haman to banquet #2.

But as Haman was leaving that banquet on what should have been the best night of his life..

He runs into Mordecai the Jew who refuses to bow for him.

So, he goes home and builds a gallows upon which to hang Mordecai.

And then plans to go meet the king early the next morning to get permission to do it.

As he rushed to king's palace the next morning, he is met with a king who had trouble sleeping....

And during the middle of the night, he opened up the history books of his kingdom.....

Where he reads where Mordecai was never honored for saving his life 5 years earlier.

So, when his right hand man, Haman, arrives at the palace..

He orders him to make plans to honor Mordecai before Haman is able to ask permission to kill him.

And when we finished up last week, Haman was grinning and bearing it...

As he paraded Mordecai around the town square declaring how great he was...

So, now we move to verse 12 of chapter 6...

And let's read the final few verses of this chapter...

Which I entitled...

## **I. Opposing God's People Is Hopeless (6:12-14)**

Let's read this final section of chapter 6, beginning in verse 12...

***12 Then Mordecai returned to the king's gate. But Haman hurried home, mourning, with his head covered. 13 Haman recounted to Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him. Then his wise men and Zeresh his wife said to him, "If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is [c]of Jewish origin, you will not overcome him, but will surely fall before him."14 While they were still talking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and hastily brought Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared.***

The story is told of how the late Sam Walton, the founder of Wal Mart still drove an old pickup truck to work even after he could afford something much bigger to drive.

Walton claimed that he never wanted to get bigger and more important than the people he employed.

He said that resentment will kill a business if the employees are jealous of the owner.

So, he continued to fly coach.

He tried to dress nicely but modest.

And he drove a truck to work each day that had cages for his dogs in the back.



I want you to consider Mordecai here.

He has just been paraded around town before all the people...

Yet, what happens when the parade is over...

He goes back to his normal place at the city gate.

That is an example of humility.

Where did Haman go after leaving the first banquet?

He went to his friends to boast of the wonderful honor.

Where did Mordecai go after being honored?

To his normal place at the king's gate.

Listen to what Chuck Swindoll says about this...

*Have you recently been promoted? Has God's providence smiled on you so that your name is now honored in circles where you were once not even known? Have you come to a place of popularity and prosperity? Are you now esteemed in the eyes of others? If so, the real question is: **Are you still comfortable at the king's gate, or must you now live at the palace?** Must you now be treated with special care and be given kid-glove treatment and not bothered with everyday problems?*

What is Dad's favorite advice when he sends his son off to college?

“Boy, don’t forget where you are from.”

And that is important for all of us as well.

Honors may come into our hands, but they never need to go to our heads.

We are most undeserving of anything.

Everything that is spoken as a compliment to us is a reflection of God’s goodness in our lives.

Do you know why Mordecai was being honored?

God had put him in the right place at the right time to hear the details of an assassination plot.

And then moved him to tell the king.

So, Mordecai went back to the gate, and besides, he has no reason to celebrate...

There is still a death penalty over his head and over the heads of every Jew in the kingdom.

On the other hand, Haman goes off pouting to his wife and friends.

If you look at Esther 5:11, the Bible says that Haman went to his wife and friends after the first banquet and recounted all his honors...

Now in 6:13...the Bible says that Haman went to his wife and friends and recounted all his humiliation.

And then in the last part of verse 13, his wife and friends say something very important...

“If Mordecai is a Jew, you will fall before him.”

This is also amazing.

One day, they were saying “Kill Mordecai,” but now they are saying “Mordecai will kill you.”

That is incredible, considering that these were pagan Persians.

But they knew enough history to know that Israel was a powerful force in the world.

And they also knew enough to know that God had protected them from every enemy.

Why had they not offered this information earlier?

Who knows?

Maybe they are like the friends who stand around and tell you something is a good idea....

Knowing in the back of their minds that it will never work.

They just want to see you try.

And now that Mordecai had tried and failed...

They are saying what your friends would say as well....

“That was a horrible idea.”

Regardless of the reason why they now say this, the truth is that they are exactly right.

God protects his people.

Does that mean that His people never fall to the enemy?

Not at all.

History is full of martyrs, and there are Christians even today who fall to the enemies of God..

But the fact remains that God always preserves a remnant of His people.

Frederick the Great was the king of Prussia in the mid 1700s.

Prussia is modern day Poland and Germany.

But Frederick was a troubled man.

And he was troubled over the existence of God.

He was heavily influenced by atheists, and so one day, he is talking with his chaplain and he said...

*“If your Bible is really true, it ought to be capable of very easy proof. If it is indeed from God, you should be able to demonstrate the fact simply, without complicated arguments. Give me proof for the inspiration of the Bible in one word.”*

The chaplain replied, “Israel.”

It is true that the continued existence of Israel is great proof of God's existence.,

Show me a Canaanite today.

Show me a Hittite today.

Show me any "-ite" today.

But if I say show me an Israelite today, you would have no problem finding one.

That is a testimony to the Lord's protection of His people throughout history.

And Haman's family and friends knew, even in 400 BC that God protected his people in the world.

And no sooner did they get that out of their mouth, that the king's men show up and take Haman to banquet #2.

Now remember from what we assume, Haman still doesn't know that Esther is a Jew.

Though it has been a bad day, maybe Haman's fortune will change at this second banquet with the king and queen.

And that brings us to chapter 7.

If we learned in the last part of chapter 6 that  
OPPOSING GOD'S PEOPLE IS HOPELESS...

We will learn in this section that....

## **II. Defending God's People Is Rewarded (7:1-6)**

Chapter 7, verse 1...

*7 Now the king and Haman came to drink wine with Esther the queen. <sup>2</sup> And the king said to Esther on the second day also <sup>[a]</sup> as they drank their wine at the banquet, "What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be done."*

We are seeing this for the third time.

Up to this point in time, the king still has no idea why Esther risked her life in appearing before him.

He must be on the edge of his seat wondering what she wants.

And think of Haman now.

Here is here.

His pride level is probably rising from the low point of just a few hours ago.

He is probably feeling good.

Ecclesiastes 8:11 says that an evil man continues to do evil because his punishment does not come swiftly.

This is probably running through Haman's mind at this moment.

Though he had to honor Mordecai, he is probably feeling good knowing that Mordecai and his people will ultimately be destroyed.

Then that all changes for him in the next 2 verses...

***<sup>3</sup> Then Queen Esther replied, “If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me as my petition, and my people as my request; <sup>4</sup> for we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed and to be annihilated. Now if we had only been sold as slaves, men and women, I would have remained silent, for the <sup>[b]</sup>trouble would not be commensurate with the <sup>[c]</sup>annoyance to the king.”***

In the climax of the book, Esther speaks the words that she was unable to say in two previous attempts.

She takes her request before the king asking for the king to change his law and save the Jews from certain destruction.

Let me make this observation here...

Knowing how to say something is as important as knowing what to say at times.

Esther was very gracious in her request.

She didn't accuse the king of wanting to kill her people.

In fact, she didn't accuse anyone.

She was kind to the king in making her request.

She speaks well of him.

She is respectful.

She doesn't say, "That law that you passed to annihilate the Jews is horrible. You need to change that."

No, even though she may think that, she uses restraint and simply makes a gracious request to the king.

The application for you and me is this...

Season your speech with grace.

Colossians 4:5-6...

<sup>5</sup> <sup>[a]</sup> ***Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, <sup>[b]</sup>making the most of the opportunity.***  
<sup>6</sup> ***Let your speech always be <sup>[c]</sup>with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.***

Simply put, there is wisdom in how we talk to people.

That does not mean that we compromise the truth or the gospel.

Never do that.

But be aware of how you say things to people.

For instance, the truth is that everyone who is not a Christian is headed to hell.



But that doesn't mean that you start every conversation with an unbeliever by sharing that with them from the start.

You don't walk through Wal Mart pointing fingers and saying "You are going to hell."

Case in point...

At seminary, I met some guys who are tremendously intelligent about Scripture.

They are lovers of the Lord and they know his word inside and out...

Yet they can't carry on a conversation with a fire hydrant.

They know nothing of gracious speech, and because of that, people don't care to listen to them.

And again that doesn't mean, you compromise the truth.

It simply means...you are wise in how, when and where you say what needs to be said.

We must always speak the truth, but we always speak it in love.

And Esther is a good example her of picking the right words and speaking them at the right time...

But yet, we don't know how the king will respond.

He could simply be offended and reject the request.

He could simply ignore it.

But you all know what happens in verse 5...

***<sup>5</sup> Then King Ahasuerus <sup>[d]</sup>asked Queen Esther,  
“Who is he, and where is he, <sup>[e]</sup>who would  
presume to do thus?” <sup>6</sup> Esther said, “A foe and an  
enemy is this wicked Haman!” Then Haman  
became terrified before the king and queen.***

In my imagination, I picture Haman halfway  
through a bite of steak here.

And then, he suddenly stops chewing.

His evil plot is now exposed.

There is but one final truth to see in verses 7-10 of  
this chapter....

And it is this....

### **III. Attacking God's People is Punished (7:7-10)**

Verse 7...

***<sup>7</sup> The king arose in his anger from <sup>[1]</sup>drinking wine and went into the palace garden; but Haman stayed to beg for his life from Queen Esther, for he saw that harm had been determined against him by the king.***

The stories of famous athletes going broke are everywhere.

Mike Tyson made 400 million dollars as a boxer but later filed for bankruptcy.

John Daly made 50 million as a golfer but eventually went broke.

Men that had millions but eventually went to court asking for mercy from people wanting money from them.

And here you have a proud man named Haman.

A man who was obsessed with people bowing before him...

Pushed to the point of bowing before a Jew begging for his life.

The tables have certainly turned on Haman.

And it is about to get worse..

Verse 8...

***<sup>8</sup>Now when the king returned from the palace garden into the <sup>[g]</sup>place where they were drinking wine, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was. Then the king said, “Will he even assault the queen with me in the house?” As the word went out of the king’s mouth, they covered Haman’s face.***

God is sovereign to put people in the right place at the right time...

But His sovereignty in this case put Haman in the wrong place at the wrong time.

In the process of begging for his life, he falls on the couch just as the king walks back into the palace.

And the sight of seeing Haman fall upon the queen is the straw that breaks the king’s back.

So, he speaks in anger at Haman and the king’s men go to Haman and cover his face.

And then the chapter ends with verses 9 and 10...

***<sup>9</sup>Then Harbonah, one of the eunuchs who were before the king said, “Behold indeed, the gallows standing at Haman’s house fifty cubits high, which Haman made for Mordecai who spoke good on behalf of the king!” And the king said, “Hang him on it.”<sup>10</sup> So they hanged Haman on the <sup>[h]</sup>gallows which he had prepared for Mordecai, and the king’s anger subsided.***

How did the king’s eunuch know about the gallows?

The Bible doesn't say, but judging by Haman's pride, it is safe to assume that he had been boasting about it.

"Yep, those are the gallows where I will hang Mordecai."

Just a day earlier, those were probably the words coming out of his mouth.

Yet, just a day later, he is being hanged on what he had built.

Job 4:8 reads,

***"Those who plow iniquity and those who sow trouble are the ones who harvest it."***

On one day, Haman was sowing the sin of murder, but the next day he was reaping the harvest...

The only problem is that he was the one being killed.

Just think of the last day of Haman's life...

How he went from...

BEING HONORED to

BEING HUMILIATED to

BEING HORRIFIED to

BEING HANGED.

That is an incredible turnaround in the life of Haman.

And it stands as a warning to all of us.

Sin is dangerous.

It is to be avoided at all costs.

And it is to be crucified in our own lives when we see it.

## **Conclusion**

I want to end with a verse that speaks to this principle.

It is one that many of you know by heart...

Take your Bibles and turn with me to Galatians 6...

Let's look at Galatians 6:7.....

Galatians 6:7

***<sup>7</sup> Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. <sup>8</sup> For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption,***

That is a clear warning from the Scripture...

But right beside that warning is an incredible promise from God as well..

Look at the second half of verse 8....

***but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. <sup>9</sup> Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.***

This is an important idea.

What Paul means about sowing to the Spirit is simply a life lived in obedience to God.

The little choices we make every day to read the Scriptures, pray, do the right thing.

That is the process of sowing to the Spirit, and it is the opposite of sowing to the flesh.

Obviously, there is an eternal reward to this.

Though our salvation is a settled matter, we obey to please the Lord.

But we also obey to make obedience easier the next time we are tempted.

Listen to what CS Lewis said about this...

*“Every time you make a choice you are turning the central part of you, the part of you that chooses, into something a little different from what it was before”*

In a lot of ways, Haman’s life was a snowball of sin.

His pride led to anger when Mordecai didn’t bow, and that anger led to a plan to murder.

He sowed to his flesh and he reaped from it.

We need to be people who sow to the Spirit.

And we are promised a snowball effect in the opposite way.

Obey today and reap the harvest of obedience tomorrow.

Which is often more temptation.



As we look on this chapter and see the ultimate sentence of sin, may we pledge to put off sin and look forward to the harvest...

That brings both tomorrow and in eternity.