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## **MINISTRY OF THE WORD**

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### **The Way of God's Providence**

Esther 5

1 Peter 4:19: "Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right."

The word for "entrust" was a banking term in Christ's day in which a person deposited or "entrusted" their money to a banker.<sup>1</sup> And just as it is in our day, these bankers did two things with the money: (1) They protected it, and (2) They grew it — typically at the rate of 6% interest.

It is against this backdrop that Peter called us to “entrust our souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.” This exhortation therefore brings with a twofold act of faith. This involves releasing control! With a bank, you wouldn’t tell them how to protect your money; that is addressed before the deposit. And so, it must be when it comes to your soul entrusted to God. This also involves submission! The bank is going to grow the deposit as they see fit. And so, it is with God. To “entrust your soul to God” is to submit to His program for its growth!

Now in theory this sounds fine, until you discover that God’s program for growth involves pain. It couldn’t be clearer than what Paul wrote to the Philippians:

Philippians 1:29, “For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.”

You ask, “Why would God save me unto suffering?” Because we know — or are supposed to know — that this is what is necessary for spiritual growth in this estate of sin and misery. James wrote

James 1:2-3, “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.”

Paul declared:

Romans 5:3, “And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance.”

C. S. Lewis put it like this:

I am progressing along the path of life in my ordinary contentedly fallen and godless condition... when suddenly a stab of abdominal pain that threatens serious disease, or a headline in the newspapers that threatens us all with destruction, sends this whole pack of cards tumbling down. At first, I am overwhelmed, and all my little happinesses look like broken toys. Then, slowly and reluctantly, bit by bit, I try to bring myself into the frame of mind that I should be in at all times. I remind myself that all these toys were never intended to possess my heart, that my true good is in another world and my only real treasure is Christ. And perhaps, by God’s grace, I succeed, and for a day or two become a creature consciously dependent on God and drawing its strength from the right sources. But the moment the threat is withdrawn, my whole nature leaps back to the toys... Thus the terrible necessity of tribulation is only too clear. God has had me for but forty-eight hours and then only by dint of taking everything else away from me. Let Him but sheathe that sword for a moment and I behave like a puppy when the hated bath is over — I shake myself as dry as I can and race off to reacquire my comfortable dirtiness, if not in the nearest manure heap, at least in the nearest flower bed. And that is why

tribulations cannot cease until God... sees us remade. (Lewis, 2015, pp. 106-107)

So, if you are in Christ there is going to be pain and struggle. It is how God grows faith and so “the deposit” we have made with Him!

This morning we see this in the chapter before us as it reflects The Way of God’s Providence. We begin with Esther’s boldness.

### Esther’s Boldness, vv. 1-8.

Esther 5:1, “Now it came about on the third day [not ‘after’ the third day] that Esther put on her royal<sup>2</sup> robes<sup>3</sup> and stood in the inner court of the king’s palace in front of the king’s rooms, and the king was sitting on his royal throne in the throne room<sup>4</sup>, opposite the entrance to the palace.”

I have yet to comment on the specific descriptions that pervade this book when it comes to the Persian court and culture. Liberals want to place the writing of Esther a couple hundred years later, in the third century BC. Yet clearly, whoever wrote this chronicle was intimately familiar with Persia, the capital city, the inner court, and the Royal culture and confines of the day.

We see that reflected here, “Esther... stood in the inner court of the king’s palace in front of the king’s rooms, and the king was sitting on his royal throne in the throne room, opposite the entrance to the palace.” Clearly, whoever wrote this book had to have lived in Persia at this time.

Esther 5:2-3, “And it happened when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, she obtained favor in his sight<sup>5</sup>; and the king extended to Esther the golden scepter which was in his hand.<sup>6</sup> So Esther came near and touched the top of the scepter. Then the king said to her, ‘What is *troubling* you, Queen Esther? And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it will be given to you.’”

The cultural mores behind this tells us that the promise of “half the kingdom” was NOT literal.<sup>7,8,9</sup> That being said, the expression was NOT meaningless. It was an important offer intended to reflect an over-abundance of generosity. You can imagine Esther’s relief as she dared to approach Ahasuerus’ throne without a summons.

Now the fact that this put her life on the line indicated to the king that something very important had come up. Accordingly, Ahasuerus said to her, “What is troubling you, Queen Esther?”

Esther 5:4-6, “And Esther said, ‘If it please the king, may the king and Haman come<sup>10</sup> this day to the banquet that I have prepared for him.’ Then the king said, ‘Bring Haman quickly that we may do as Esther desires.’ So the king and Haman came to

the banquet which Esther had prepared.<sup>11</sup> And, as they drank their wine at the banquet, the king said to Esther, 'What is your petition, for it shall be granted to you. And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be done.'

When the text says that "Esther prepared the banquet" that does NOT mean she cooked it. RATHER, it simply means she organized it beforehand such that it was waiting for them when they entered the room.

Now, most likely following the meal as they reclined on their couches "sipping wine,"<sup>12</sup> the king repeated the question he asked previously in the royal court, "What is your petition?"

Esther 5:7-8, "So Esther answered and said, 'My petition and my request is: if I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition and do what I request, may the king and Haman come to the banquet which I shall prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king says.'<sup>13</sup>"

At first seems as though Esther lost her confidence... "*So, Esther now that you have us at this meal, what do you want?... Another meal?*" Yet that doesn't fit the context.

Esther NOT ONLY entrusted herself to God even unto death (Esther 4:16),<sup>14</sup> BUT she had just laid her life on the line in approaching the king uninvited!<sup>15</sup> So, why would she ask for another meal? Most believe Esther is using her ability to influence people in a masterful way.<sup>16,17,18</sup> Iain Duguid gave the clearest explanation when he wrote this:

Why didn't Esther strike while the iron was hot? Did she simply lose her nerve and so fail to make the request when the opportunity was there? Perhaps, but there is a more likely explanation. Esther was playing the king like a trophy fish, taking her time and not rushing to reel him into her net. She was carefully maneuvering him into a position where he would be virtually obligated to do whatever she asked, without his even being aware that he had been hooked. He had now twice publicly offered to grant Esther whatever she desired, up to half his kingdom. Her response was a study in meekness, an attribute she knew the king valued in women. She began, 'If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it please the king...' (Esther. 5:8), making the king feel as if he were in full control of his fate. Since all she was overtly requesting the king to do was to come to another feast the next day, it is hard to see how the king could reasonably have refused her invitation. This is all the more true, since the purpose of the feast was to 'do as the king has said'- that is, to reveal her petition. Curiosity alone would have made it hard for the king to stay away.

Yet if the king came to her second feast, he was implicitly agreeing in advance to grant her wish and fulfill her request, whatever it was (Esth. 5:8). If he tried to back out at that point, there would have been three public strikes against him. He would lose a great deal of face if he went back on such a public and repeated

promise. It seemed that Esther had laid her plans well and executed them with patience, care, and cunning. (Duguid, 2005, pp. 63-64)

And so, with what might initially sound like weakness, Esther made the request for another meal. With this, we are set up for chapter 6 & 7. So, what do we take from the first eight verses of this chapter? What stands out? Clearly Esther's Boldness!

In the previous chapter we read how Mordecai and Esther's faith was invigorated by gazing upon the Person and Promise of God. It truly is as Christ said in...

John 12:32, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."

Growth in grace comes NOT as WE do more things, BUT as we come to know more and more the greatness of God and the glory of His promises. Because of this (cf. Esther 4), Esther's faith was emboldened to approach the king knowing that it could cost her her life. Yet there is more here. Our text says that it was "on the third day" that "Esther put on her royal robes" and approached the king. The reference to "the third day" brings us back to the fast in which she, her maidens, and many other Jews participated...

Esther 4:16a, "Go, assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa, and fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day, I and my maidens also will fast in the same way..."

That the fast was scheduled both for "night and day" meant that the fast was NOT broken at sunset. In other words, they went three days and nights without food!<sup>19</sup> What would Esther have looked like after NOT "eating or drinking for three days"? You'd think that if she was after Ahasuerus acceptance, then a three day fast would have been the last thing she would have done. Yet in her renewed faith and trust in God, she knew that "the race is not to the swift, and the battle is not to the warriors... nor favor to men of ability" (Ecclesiastes 9:11). Her acceptance by Ahasuerus was based solely on God's will, not man's!

Proverbs 21:1, "The king's heart is *like* channels of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes."

And so, armed with a strong reliance upon God, Esther fearlessly entered into the court of the king and appealed to speak to her husband and Haman in private.

This is what faith does! Resting in God and His promises, the believer is able to see this world for what it really is- *as God sees it*.

- Monsters become manageable.
- Mountains of fear, doubt, guilt, or worry are moved.
- Lions (the emblem of the Persian king) become as kittens.



With this, we are brought to vv. 9-13 where we behold something of the insatiability of sin, with Haman's disdain.

### Haman's Disdain, vv. 9-13.

Following the first banquet we read this:

Esther 5:9a, "Then Haman went out that day glad and pleased of heart..."

How could it be otherwise? As I referenced in my Introduction a couple week's back, Haman's Achilles heel was his need for public respect.

Esther. 6:6-9, "So Haman came in and the king said to him, 'What is to be done for the man whom the king desires to honor?' And Haman said to himself, 'Whom would the king desire to honor more than me?' Then Haman said to the king, 'For the man whom the king desires to honor [Realize, Haman here knows that whatever he asks is what he is going to get! So, notice that for which he asked...], let them bring a royal robe which the king has worn, and the horse on which the king has ridden, and on whose head a royal crown has been placed; and let the robe and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble princes and let them array the man whom the king desires to honor and lead him on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him, 'Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honor.'"

Clearly, there was nothing more important to Haman than public respect.<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, to have been signaled out by the queen as one deserving special treatment, Haman most certainly would have been on cloud nine! Yet it is this which also explains the incredibly irrational response of the next statement.

Esther 5:9b, "...but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, and that he did not [publicly] stand up or tremble before him, Haman was filled with anger against Mordecai."<sup>21</sup>

Here we have the insatiability of sin! You can have the best of everything that this world has to offer and yet lack that one thing you most desire, *AND* your happiness will turn into regret, anger, or sorrow! Listen to how Peter described ones taken over by sin:

2 Peter 2:12a, "But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct..."

Sin transforms image bearers into animals which have little rational capability, BUT operate on unthinking passion/instinct. And so, it was with Haman. It wasn't enough that the Queen (of the most powerful nation in the world) invited him to a banquet, he must have the respect of an insignificant judge! He was like a dog who drops his bone to take the bone of the dog next to him!

Esther 5:10-13, "Haman controlled himself, however, went to his house, and sent for his friends and his wife Zeresh. Then Haman recounted to them the glory of his riches<sup>22</sup>, and the number of his sons, and every *instance* where the king had magnified him, and how he had promoted him above the princes and servants of the king. Haman also said, 'Even Esther the queen let no one but me come with the king to the banquet which she had prepared; and tomorrow also I am invited by her with the king. Yet all of this does not satisfy me every time I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.'"

Behold the underside of sin, it is unsatiable! No matter how much respect Haman enjoyed as the second most powerful man in Persia, he could NOT live in a world where an insignificant Jew did not honor him! Haman must have his respect at well! Referencing sin, the wiseman wrote this:

Proverbs 30:15a, "The leech has two daughters, 'Give,' 'Give.'" - truly, as a leech is never satisfied, so is our sin.

It is because of this that living as a child of God is going to be difficult in this state of sin and misery. Satan blinds the non-believer into thinking that they are doing a service in attacking Christ and His followers (John 16:2) as we see here!

Accordingly, no matter how much we might suffer as Christians or endeavor to be nice to a dead and dying world, know that Satan and the world will never be satisfied until Christ and Christianity are wiped out! And that brings us lastly to Mordecai's peril.

### Mordecai's Peril, v. 14.

Esther 5:14, "Then Zeresh his wife and all his friends said to him, 'Have a gallows fifty cubits high made<sup>23,24</sup> and in the morning ask the king to have Mordecai hanged on it, then go joyfully with the king to the banquet.'<sup>25</sup> And the advice pleased Haman, so he had the gallows made."

There is debate as to what constituted "the gallows" referenced here. On the surface it sounds like Zeresh suggested that Haman construct massive gallows, seventy-five feet high, on which to hang Mordecai. However, we also know that the primary means of execution in Persia was NOT hanging BUT impaling (where a person would be skewered lengthwise on a stake). Many a commentator believes that this is what Zeresh was suggesting here, the impaling of Mordecai on a seventy-five-foot pole! Either way, Mordecai would be

executed- which brings us to the theme of this chapter.

From Mordecai's perspective, this is the very next thing that happened after he turned his heart to the Lord in which he "fasted three days and nights." His imminent death! In Mordecai's stubbornness he reaped the disaster of Haman's wrath which promised the destruction of the Jews in eleven months. This humbled Mordecai such that he turned to God. And what happened was that this eleven-month time frame for his execution was SHORTENED to a day!

This makes me think of *It's a Wonderful Life* when George Bailey took a hit in the mouth right after he prayed. Remember what he said as he got up? "*That's what I get for praying!*"

Do you ever feel like that? I can't imagine that Mordecai didn't! Yet we must see that this is how God works! It is always darkest before dawn! If our best occurs when "Christ is lifted up" (John 12:32), then you can be sure that God's sanctifying grace is going to bring you time and time to the brink where the only thing you have or value is Christ! We see it in Lazarus' death.

In John we read of the death of Lazarus, a death so shocking to Martha that she rebuked Christ, "...Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." (John 11:21b) The truth be known, when He heard about Lazarus' illness, Christ delayed two days, *so that Lazarus might die!* The text says no less than three times that it was because "He loved them" (cf. John 11:2, 3, 5)!

If He loved them, why would He allow Lazarus to die? Because Lazarus' death was "unto the glory of God."

John 11:4, "But when Jesus heard it, He said, 'This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it.'"

John Piper commenting on this verse, said this:

Love lets him die because his death will let them see the glory of God... This is one of the reasons why Christianity is hard to believe in for many people because it defines love in a way that is so different.

So, what is love?... Love means giving us what we need most. What do we need most? What human beings need most is a full and endless experience of the glory of God.

Look at the way He says it in verses 14 and 15, 'Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad..."' It might even sound stronger if you translated *chairō* 'I rejoice! ... I rejoice that I was not there... so that- here He does



not say so that the glory of God may be manifest. Instead, He says the human counterpart to the seeing of the glory of God- namely, *'that you may believe.'*

There are two great purposes of the universe... the demonstration of the glory of God in Jesus Christ... and believing humans... And so, Christ here says, 'I love them. Therefore, I'm not going to go; I'm going to let him die. I'm going to put him through this horrible four days [or for you it might be forty years] because I have something to show them, they could never see any other way'... The main point of this text is that love is doing what you have to do to bring people to the fullest knowledge of and enjoyment of the glory of God. (Piper, 2011)

That is The Way of God's Providence!

Look at Scripture and the way God brings about growth in the child of God. He brings them to the end of themselves so that all they have is Christ- whether that means making bricks without straw (Exodus 5:7-8), fighting the Amalekites with 300 men (Judges 7:4-8), or being trapped in a city with thousands of soldiers surrounding it seeking your life (2 Kings 6:14-17)! Paul wrote:

Philippians 3:8, "More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ."

It is when we are weak in this world that we are most strong in Christ! Notice where David's walk with God was the most intimate:

Psalms 63:1-2, "O God, Thou art my God; I shall seek Thee earnestly; my soul thirsts for Thee, my flesh yearns for Thee, IN A DRY AND WEARY LAND WHERE THERE IS NO WATER. THUS I have beheld Thee in the sanctuary, to see Thy power and Thy glory."

It is when David lost everything that he came to enjoy Christ! After struggling with the trial and difficulties God ordains for His people, Asaph arrived at this glorious confession:

Psalms 73:28a, "But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord God my refuge..."

Accordingly, God in His love for Mordecai brought him to a place where he and all God's people would come to know the greatness of the glory of God's preserving grace! Mark it: That is the Way of Providence! What therefore ought we to expect when it comes to God's sanctifying grace in our lives? Overtime situations where our life is pulled out of the clutches of death at the last possible moment.

As you and I understand this, how it behooves us to prepare ourselves now so that when the day comes (1) we do NOT question or curse God, BUT RATHER (2) we work with the pain

to give us a greater disdain for the passing things of this life as well as a greater hunger and thirst for Christ!

May God give us the grace to confess with Rutherford,

...Whether God come to His children with a rod or a crown, if He come Himself with it, it is well. Welcome, welcome, Jesus, what way soever Thou come, if we can get a sight of Thee! And sure I am, it is better to be sick, providing Christ come to the bedside and draw by the curtains, and say, 'Courage, I am Thy salvation,' than to enjoy health, being lusty and strong, and never to be visited of God. (Rutherford, 1997, p. 52)

Some of the redemptive principles revealed in this chapter:

- Esther's reception before Ahasuerus is eclipsed by the reception we have with God in Christ, Esther 5:2; Matthew 25:21, 23.<sup>26</sup>
- The grace granted by Ahasuerus to Esther was nothing in comparison to the promises granted us in Christ, Esther 5:6; 2 Corinthians 1:20.
- Esther lived before Ahasuerus hoping that she found favor in his eyes, Esther 5:8. The child of God lives before God knowing he has found favor with God in Christ, Romans 8:1, 31-39.
- Haman was defined by his possessions and promotions, Esther 5:11. We are not defined by what we have, think, or do, but by God's love for us, Ephesians 1:6.
- Just as Haman built the means of his own execution, so today all outside of Christ are working on the very means of their own execution as they sin against God, Esther 5:14; Romans 2:5.
- The gallows, literally the "tree", constructed on such a scale would have been visible throughout the capital (Esther 5:14). The tree on which Christ hung has been seen throughout the ages. But unlike Haman's tree which would have evoked fear in the heart of all who saw it, Christ's tree brings life, love, and peace to all who see it with the eye of faith!<sup>27</sup>

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## End Note(s)

<sup>1</sup> Literally “a bencher” as they sat at benches as money changers.

<sup>2</sup> “The Hebrew word *malkût* (‘royalty’) is used three times in this verse. Esther literally ‘puts on royalty’ and Xerxes sits on ‘his throne of royalty’ in ‘the house of royalty’. The verse also refers to Xerxes three times as ‘the king’ (melek). The emphasis could not be clearer: Esther is entering her other world, the king’s territory. As she does, she enters cautiously and dresses appropriately.” (Reid, 2008, p. 106)

<sup>3</sup> “Her royal robes (Heb. *malkût*, ‘royalty’) demonstrated that she approached the king as one with privileged status as the king’s consort. She presented herself, albeit with due deference, as the king’s counterpart (cf. Genesis 2:18, ‘a helper fit for him’)...” (Baldwin, 1985, p. 85)

<sup>4</sup> “There the apadana or ‘hall of pillars’, modelled on that at Susa, with its thirty-six columns, soared up to a height of 65 feet. Its pillars were ‘the most slender and airy columns ever produced by the hand of man’. This was the throne room into which Esther dared to step and stand within the view of the king, contrary to the law.” (Baldwin, 1985, p. 85)

<sup>5</sup> “The LXX expands vv.1–2 considerably. It tells how Esther fainted when she saw the anger on the king’s face. Her fear softened the king’s attitude toward her. He sprang from his throne, embraced her, and assured her that she would not be put to death. The LXX attributed his change of attitude to God.” (Huey, 1988, p. 4819)

<sup>6</sup> “The king’s movement of his sceptre indicates that Esther is to approach and touch the tip of it, to symbolize her acceptance.” (Baldwin, 1985, p. 86)

<sup>7</sup> “Commentators usually remark on the extravagance of the king’s vow to grant anything to Esther, even to the half of my kingdom. The repetition of the expression (v. 6) suggests that it was a conventional phrase (cf. its very different setting in Mark 6:23). The declaration of the marriage service, ‘with all my worldly [sic] goods I thee endow’, and its modern wording, ‘all that I have I share with you’, is in any case far more extravagant in its generosity.” (Baldwin, 1985, p. 86)

<sup>8</sup> “Up to half the kingdom” apparently was a formality, but Herodotus told how another woman, Artaynte, once took advantage of Xerxes when he made the same promise and asked for the beautiful robe that Amestris, his wife, had given him. The results were disastrous and finally brought about the death of Xerxes’ brother and family.” (Breneman, 1993, p. 339)

<sup>9</sup> “The offer of half the kingdom was probably an example of Oriental courtesy that was not intended to be taken too literally (cf. Mark 6:23).” (Huey, 1988, p. 4819)

<sup>10</sup> “‘Let the king ... come today.’ The initial letters of each word in this phrase spell the divine name, ‘Yahweh’ (YHWH). A few codices even have these letters written large to call attention to this fact. If this was the author’s intent, then the divine name is used in Esther in a coded form. Such cryptic codes are not needed to find God in the text. The course of events is the best evidence of divine guidance and all that one needs to see the presence of God.”- to which I say, “Amen!” (Breneman, 1993, pp. 339-340)

<sup>11</sup> “More literally, the king acted ‘according to the word of Esther.’ So much for his earlier decree that each man should be master in his own house (see Esther 1:22)!” (Duguid, 2005, p. 63)

<sup>12</sup> “Once the leisurely eastern feast was over, the three reclined on their couches (cf. 1:6) and drank wine, an occupation that our writer takes every opportunity to point out.” (Baldwin, 1985, p. 87)

<sup>13</sup> “Esther’s request is an anti-climax, which nevertheless is in keeping with protocol, for a formal state occasion is no place for the queen to disclose her mind. Though they are not mentioned, retainers would be present, as well as guards and other officials. The dinner-party, though not without its attendants, would be much less public and formal, and the king would assume that the question of the request was his to raise again. It was a daring move to invite Haman to the dinner as the only guest of the royal couple, and yet it would be perfectly in keeping with the king’s recent promotion of this man (3:1), whom he had

made his equal and friend (3:10, 15), and would therefore occasion no surprise.” (Baldwin, 1985, p. 86)

<sup>14</sup> Recall her statement in 4:16, “If I perish, I perish!”

<sup>15</sup> “Esther declared her commitment to put her life on the line by appearing unsummoned before King Ahasuerus. Humanly speaking, such an act was playing Russian roulette, for those who appeared before the king without invitation were liable to immediate execution. This was no empty threat. Contemporary depictions of the Persian king excavated at Persepolis show him seated on his throne holding his scepter, flanked by various officials, including a soldier with an ax.” (Iain M. Duguid, *Esther and Ruth*, REC, pp. 60-61)

<sup>16</sup> “We can also see an indication of God’s wisdom given to Esther. She sensed that the time was not right for her important request. In God’s providence time was needed for some other details before Esther made her request.” (Breneman, 1993, p. 340)

<sup>17</sup> “There is an interesting twist here because the writer of the story always refers to Esther ‘winning’ favour in an active sense. In her wisdom and deference Esther presents herself as passive: she ‘finds’ favour; it is given to her rather than extracted by her. As Bush explains, ‘Esther is shrewdly and subtly pursuing a well-designed plan by which she has manoeuvred the king into committing himself in advance’ (1996: 407). Esther ends by placing herself under the authority of the king’s word (cf. comments on 5:5 above), implying that the second banquet invitation is part of her compliance to the king.” (Reid, 2008, p. 109)

<sup>18</sup> “Bush (Ruth, *Esther*, p. 405) sees the sentence as broken but quite plausibly suggests that, rather than hesitating, Esther is skillfully gaining the king’s support prior to articulating her request... Whichever the nuance, Esther is acting cleverly and intentionally. Certainly the rest of the story will prove her wisdom in keeping the king and his prime minister together over this two-day period.” (Lanaik, 1995, p. 236)

<sup>19</sup> “Keil says the fast would have lasted from the afternoon of the first day until the morning of the third day, forty or forty-five hours.” (Breneman, 1993, p. 339)

<sup>20</sup> “What Haman craved above all things was not simply significance, but rather being seen to be significant. It was quite an accolade, he thought, that he alone was summoned to this unprecedented and intimate party with the king and queen. Surely his star was now rising to unparalleled heights.” (Duguid, 2005, p. 64)

<sup>21</sup> “When that idol was fed, he felt good; but when his idol was challenged, it led him to malice and anger, the same malice that caused his earlier decree to eliminate the Jewish people. His joy and his anger were simply the outward expressions of his heart’s idolatry.” (Duguid, 2005, p. 65)

<sup>22</sup> “As ‘fools proclaim their folly’ (Pr. 12:23), so Haman could not conceal the extent of his prosperity. His order of priorities puts his riches in first place, even before his sons, who we learn later were ten in number (9:7–10), but uppermost in his thoughts are the recent honours which give him precedence over every other subject in the kingdom.” (Baldwin, 1985, pp. 87-88)

<sup>23</sup> “A gallows (Heb. ‘ēš) is literally ‘tree’; it could have been a pole or indeed anything made of wood. The word haunts the book (cf. 2:23; 6:4; 7:9–10; 8:7; 9:13, 25). The height of the gallows, 75 feet, strikes Western commentators as exaggerated. It certainly is unnecessarily high, but then everything constructed by Persian rulers was on a grand scale, like the image of Babylonian Nebuchadrezzar (Daniel 3:1), which was 10 cubits (15 feet) higher.” (Baldwin, 1985, p. 88)

<sup>24</sup> “The height of the gallows was exorbitant and is not taken seriously by some commentators, but it is consistent with what we know of Haman’s vanity and obsessive desire for revenge.” (Huey, 1988, p. 4821)

<sup>25</sup> “Zeresh consoles her pouting husband in much the same way that Jezebel comforts Ahab in 1 Kgs. 21:7. Both devise a scheme to use the law (grounded in a false accusation) to satisfy the sulking ruler and get him what he wants. However, pride goes before a downfall, not permanent happiness.” (Lanaik, 1995, p. 236)

<sup>26</sup> “Approaching God is not like approaching Ahasuerus, with our knees trembling and hearts wondering whether we will survive the encounter.” (Duguid, 2005, p. 69)

<sup>27</sup> “The very size of the gallows would have unintentionally elevated Mordecai to a position of significance: his very death would have drawn all eyes to him (and away from Haman) in a way that a smaller gallows would not have done.” (Duguid, 2005, p. 67)