

Esther Eight: Pressed, But Not Crushed

When you read verses 1 and 2 of chapter eight, it's easy to miss the significance of the action taking place. For Xerxes to give Esther Haman's property would have been a huge deal. We learn from extra-biblical sources, like Herodotus, that the property of condemned persons reverted back to the crown.¹ Remember back in Esther 3:9? Haman offered to put ten thousand talents of silver in the royal treasury to dispatch with the Jews. Haman may very well have had more money than the king, due to royal wars and massive parties that lasted half a year draining the royal treasury. But Xerxes handed it over to Esther. Not only did he relinquish this great wealth, but Mordecai was appointed over Haman's household! Talk about God having a sense of humor... What a striking example of God lifting up those who humble themselves.

Despite this massive power shift and the acquisition of wealth unimaginable, Esther does not lose her focus or forget the reason she was brought to the palace in the first place. Esther knows that there is still a death warrant standing for her whole people. And she falls to her knees in desperation and humility:

Esther again pleaded with the king, falling
at his feet and weeping. She begged him to

put an end to the evil plan of Haman the
Agagite, which he had devised against the
Jews.²

The enemy may be dead, but his plan is not. Esther again risks her life on behalf of her people. See verse four? A tiny sentence that means life, rather than death – “Then the king extended the gold scepter to Esther and she arose...” She once again risked the wrath of the king to fulfill God's call. And He made her victorious.

Esther asks that the king reverse Haman's edict, an impossibility in regard to Medo-Persian law that the king soon reminds her of. He responds with a tone that could almost be read as annoyance, “Because Haman attacked the Jews, I have given his estate to Esther, and they have hanged him on the gallows. Now write another decree in the king's name in behalf of the Jews as seems best to you...” Another translation says it this way: “Now go ahead and send a message to the Jews in the king's name, telling them whatever you want...” Xerxes is like, “I already gave you property worth about half a kingdom *and* had my right hand man hanged. What else do you want from me?”

Have you ever felt like the one person you thought you could turn to for help got annoyed, threw up their hands and said, “I've helped you before! What do you want me to do now?” Esther probably felt crushed until the king gave her

¹ Swindoll, Charles.

² Esther 8:3

and Mordecai his royal permission to write “whatever you want” to their people. Once again, God gets to be the hero amidst the failure of a flawed human being.³ I think God lets us experience these moments of urgent hope and crushing despair to remind us that He fills the role no one else can fulfill for us.

Imagine the flurry of activity that came after that “blank check” permission. The royal secretaries were summoned “at once” and were ordered to transcribe a royal override to Haman’s decree in every language and script of the empire. Think for a minute about the atmosphere of Jewish homes for the seventy days that had passed since Haman’s edict went out.

A gloom had settled over the city of Susa and the other provinces of the kingdom. The scene probably resembled the atmosphere at Auschwitz or Dachau or Birkenau [during the Jewish Holocaust]. No one laughed.

Every day brought everyone another twenty-four hours closer to doom.⁴

And then, with the advent of the good news, “Mordecai left the king’s presence wearing royal garments of blue and white, a large crown of gold and a purple robe of fine linen. And the city of Susa held a joyous celebration.”⁵

³ Moore, Beth.

⁴ Swindoll, Charles. p. 147

⁵ Esther 8:15

Can you imagine living in a home where the threat of coming destruction, certain death, loomed every day? Then, all of the sudden, God’s mighty hand moves and He authorizes a decree that allows every enemy to be swept away before you? But that *is* what God has done! The threat of certain death loomed over you every day before He revealed His sovereign redemption for your life in Christ Jesus. Now He has overridden the law of sin and death and has allowed you to accept Christ’s sacrifice as payment for your sin and authorized you to put every enemy under your feet. It might have been difficult for the Jews to believe there was a new decree and to stand firm in their new right to defend their lives and their families, but they did! And they were saved through the provision of an Almighty God, their loving Father. And that very same Almighty God and Father has done the very same thing for us.

Scripture Reading: Esther Chapter 8, NIV

1 That same day King Xerxes gave Queen Esther the estate of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came into the presence of the king, for Esther had told how he was related to her. 2 The king took off his signet ring, which he had reclaimed from Haman, and presented it to Mordecai. And Esther appointed him over Haman’s estate.

3 Esther again pleaded with the king, falling at his feet and weeping. She begged him to put an end to the evil plan of Haman the Agagite, which he had devised against the Jews. 4

Then the king extended the gold scepter to Esther and she arose and stood before him. 5 "If it pleases the king," she said, "and if he regards me with favor and thinks it the right thing to do, and if he is pleased with me, let an order be written overruling the dispatches that Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, devised and wrote to destroy the Jews in all the king's provinces. 6 For how can I bear to see disaster fall on my people? How can I bear to see the destruction of my family?" 7 King Xerxes replied to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, "Because Haman attacked the Jews, I have given his estate to Esther, and they have impaled him on the pole he set up. 8 Now write another decree in the king's name in behalf of the Jews as seems best to you, and seal it with the king's signet ring—for no document written in the king's name and sealed with his ring can be revoked." 9 At once the royal secretaries were summoned—on the twenty-third day of the third month, the month of Sivan. They wrote out all Mordecai's orders to the Jews, and to the satraps, governors and nobles of the 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush. These orders were written in the script of each province and the language of each people and also to the Jews in their own script and language. 10 Mordecai wrote in the name of King Xerxes, sealed the dispatches with the king's signet ring, and sent them by mounted couriers, who rode fast horses especially bred for the king. 11 The king's edict granted the Jews in every city the right to assemble and protect themselves; to destroy, kill and annihilate the armed men of any nationality or province who might attack them and their women and children,^[b] and to plunder the property of their enemies. 12 The day appointed for the Jews to do this in all the provinces of King Xerxes was the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar. 13 A copy of the text of the edict

was to be issued as law in every province and made known to the people of every nationality so that the Jews would be ready on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies. 14 The couriers, riding the royal horses, went out, spurred on by the king's command, and the edict was issued in the citadel of Susa. 15 When Mordecai left the king's presence, he was wearing royal garments of blue and white, a large crown of gold and a purple robe of fine linen. And the city of Susa held a joyous celebration. 16 For the Jews it was a time of happiness and joy, gladness and honor. 17 In every province and in every city to which the edict of the king came, there was joy and gladness among the Jews, with feasting and celebrating. And many people of other nationalities became Jews because fear of the Jews had seized them.

Prayer:

Dear Father God, thank You for being the Hero in my story. Thank You for using every difficulty and disappointment in my life to draw me closer to Yourself and to conform me more to the image of Christ. Please forgive me for when I have been distracted by the glitz and glamour of earthly rewards and for the times I have succumbed to the temptation to look to other men and women to be my heroes. Help me to seek Your kingdom and Your righteousness first as I walk through the ups and downs of life. I see Your amazing faithfulness continuously portrayed in Esther's story. I see how You purposefully moved insurmountable obstacles to make a way for Your people. I patiently expect to see You move as I wait on Your direction and walk in the truth You reveal to me. Thank

You for Your patience and love as You continuously shape me into the woman You created me to be. We love You more and more. Amen.

Prayer Partners Assignment:

This week you will be meeting with a girl from your small group to memorize scripture, re-read the text for this week, and continue to fill in your Purim Chart. Please use this time to pursue the Lord together and deepen your relationship as sisters.

1. Memory Verse: 2 Corinthians 4:7-9
2. Please re-read Esther Chapter Eight
3. Fill out *Purim* Chart together. Keep all your *Purim* charts together so you can look through and see the progression of this incredible book and God's providence in and through each chapter.⁶

Sample Discussion Questions

Pre-Article Questions:

1. Think of a time when you looked to someone in your life to "rescue" you from a difficult situation. How did

they come through for you? What did they have to risk to help you?

Text Questions:

1. Look at verses one and two of chapter eight. Describe the emotions of Esther and Mordecai as the king tells them what he is going to do with Haman's estate and his old position as second-in-command.
2. Verses three and four are a poignant picture of desperation. Think about all the emotions that Esther has managed to keep under control until now. How do you think you would have reacted in her place? Would you have been distracted by the king's generosity? Would you have been willing to risk your life again?
3. How does Xerxes' response to Esther's request show his emotional removal from the queen's desperation?
4. Go back and reread Esther 3:13-15, 4:1-3. How do the emotions and actions in these passages compare with what we see in Esther 8:15-17?

Application Questions:

1. Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-9. How does this passage apply to this scene in the book of Esther? Can you feel the extreme contrasting emotions Esther was probably

⁶ Moore, 225.

experiencing? Have you ever been in a situation where you felt crushed, persecuted, or struck down?

2. Have you ever made someone other than God your hero? Why did you put that person on a pedestal, or lift them up in your life? Why is that dangerous? Did God allow him or her to fail you? If so, did God reveal Himself to you in a new way through your disappointment?
3. Are you facing an enormous obstacle today that seems immovable? Have you asked God to step in? 1 John 5:14 says "This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us." Talk with your prayer partner about any obstacle you might be facing, whether it is an internal struggle or an external circumstance. Read Matthew 18:20 together and pray together that God would reveal Himself as your Savior and Hero in that situation.
4. Jesus came with the power to reverse the curse on your life and make you a new woman. Have you had the opportunity to share that with someone who does not know Him? Is there such a dramatic difference that someone might ask you why? If you haven't had this opportunity lately, how can you and your small group create one?