

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Esther: Encouragements Of God's Faithfulness
C. Handling Perilously Incompetent Leaders
(Esther 5:3-7:10)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

We need God's insight on functioning well amid perilously incompetent leaders that we face:

(1) We face this problem in the executive branch of the federal government: Trudy Rubin's piece, "Forgotten women of Afghanistan" (Republican-American, August 19, 2021, p. 10A), regarding the president's troop withdrawal from Afghanistan, wrote: "Biden's advisers should have planned in advance for large-scale evacuations . . . They should have carried out airlifts while they still held Bagram military airport near Kabul. But they didn't plan, as military officials and concerned Congress members have complained for months."

(2) We face this problem in state institutions: The lead editorial, "Yet another money mess" in the Republican-American, August 16, 2021, p. 8A, commented, "UConn's zero-accountability culture remains alive and well. For at least two-and-a-half decades, this culture -- which has outlasted multiple governors, university presidents and board chairmen -- has caused ample embarrassment for UConn. We do not have nearly enough space to recount the individual incidents, but most of them involved money."

(3) Indeed, according to Glenn H. Reynolds, founder of the InstaPundit.com blog, as cited in his blog, "Fire the military and intelligence bigs who bungled Afghanistan -- now" by the New York Post on August 19 ("Quotable," Republican-American, August 20, 2021, p. 8A): "Our whole society is run by a technocratic-managerial class that never pays a price for failure. Democracy is a glossy finish over an unelected administrative state that isn't really accountable to anyone and measures success or failure in terms of budgets, public relations and power, not results."

(4) We face this problem in a mammoth way in religious realms: Scripture calls pastors to shepherd God's flock (1 Peter 5:1-3) and heed Christ's example (1 Peter 2:21), including sacrificially ministering for the good of the flock instead of fleeing in self-defense like a hired hand (John 10:11-13 NIV). However, Jay Reeves' story ("Many Bible Belt preachers silent on shots as COVID surges," *Ibid.*, p. 3B) reported that "95% of evangelical leaders planned to get inoculated" where "40% of white evangelical Protestants said they likely would not get vaccinated," so "the majority of ministers" are "avoiding the vaccine issue so as not to inflame tensions in congregations . . ."

On top of this, Mr. Reeves' story never mentioned that all three Covid-19 vaccines offered in the United States were developed or manufactured by use of aborted fetal cell lines! Thus, many pastors are either ignorant of that fact or they know about it but are afraid to address it along with the whole vaccination issue! Too many of us pastors function like hired hands who flee in self-defense instead of self-sacrificially proclaiming the truth as good shepherds!

Need: *So, we ask, "How does God direct us to function well in facing perilously incompetent leaders?!"*

- I. Esther had to deal with the perilously incompetent leaders of Haman and king Ahasuerus, Est. 3:8-15:**
 - A. Haman's effort to get Persia's King Ahasuerus to decree the destruction of all the Hebrews throughout the Persian realm was reckless, for it created fear among every minority group in the realm as to its own security.
 - B. The king's granting of Haman's request to kill a whole people group in his realm without investigating how such a deed would affect those in his administration, his household and his harem was utterly ridiculous!
 - C. The unrest that the edict's declaration produced just in the city of Shushan where the palace itself was located reflected the trauma much of Persia faced due to the edict's call to kill a whole people group, Esther 1:2; 3:15.
- II. However, Esther responded to this great incompetence with cautious, gracious wisdom, Esther 5:3-8:**
 - A. Before petitioning the king to punish Haman, Esther cautiously honored the king, inviting him and his favored prince Haman to a banquet in contrast to how the former, deposed Queen Vashti had publicly dishonored the king by refusing to come before his banquet guests, Esther 5:3-5 with Esther 1:1-12.
 - B. Esther continued to honor the king by requesting another banquet for him in seeking to contrast herself even more with Vashti's dishonoring of him to make the king even more disposed to grant her request, Esther 5:6-8.
- III. God then began to punish Haman publicly, encouraging Esther to petition the king about him, 5:9-6:14:**
 - A. Though Haman had gallows made to hang Mordecai (Esther 5:9-14), God caused the king to experience sleeplessness, leading to his reading about Mordecai's unrewarded exposure of a plot to kill him, Esther 6:1-3.
 - B. This reading led to God's causing the king unwittingly to block Haman's effort to ask his permission to hang Mordecai on the gallows he made for him by the king's ordering Haman publicly to honor Mordecai, 6:4-11.

C. This turn of events not only troubled Haman and his supporters (Esther 6:12-14), but it also signaled to Esther that God had begun to reverse the fortunes of Haman and Mordecai in order to deliver her Hebrew people.

IV. Emboldened by God's involvement, Esther then discreetly, successfully petitioned the king, Est. 7:1-10:

- A. Esther showed respect in telling the king that were her people merely to have been sold as slaves, she would not have bothered him about her request as the matter might seem too trivial for the king, Esther 7:4b.
- B. However, she explained that she and her Hebrew people had been sold to be destroyed, Esther 7:1-4a.
- C. The king asked her who would dare do such a thing, further encouraging Esther to expose Haman, Esther 7:5.
- D. When she charged Haman as the culprit, the king had him hung on the gallows he built for Mordecai, 7:6-10.

Lesson: *In facing perilously incompetent leaders, Esther wisely honored the king and Haman and followed God's encouraging signals to go ahead and expose Haman's wickedness to the king, resulting in Haman's fall.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life, John 3:16; 1 Cor. 15:1-11. (2) In facing perilously incompetent leaders, may we (a) respect their position, (b) follow God's leading on sensible steps to take and (c) voice our petitions as God gives us opportunity.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

We apply the sermon lesson to our lives in general and to the issues in our sermon introduction (as follows):

(1) If we do **NOT** need to relate personally to a perilously incompetent leader, we can heed Samuel's example in his response to Israel's troublesome king Saul: (a) **Avoid contact with the leader:** Samuel lived in Rama only 3 miles from Saul's town of Gibeah (1 Samuel 15:34; The Carta Bible Atlas, 2002, p. 69, map 86). Though just 3 miles apart, after Saul's sinful departure from the Lord, Samuel never visited him again, 1 Samuel 15:35. (b) **Seek to avoid conflict with the leader:** When God told Samuel to go to Bethlehem to anoint another king, Samuel voiced concern that Saul might kill him if he learned of his mission to anoint another in Saul's place, 1 Samuel 16:1-2a. (c) **Follow God's guidance to avoid conflicts and contacts with the leader:** (i) God told Samuel to take a *heifer* (used for a *peace* offering, Z. P. E. B., v. Five, p. 207-208) and go to Bethlehem, saying that he would sacrifice to the Lord there (in *peace*), what would not arouse Saul's anger, 1 Samuel 16:2b. (ii) God had Samuel invite Jesse and his sons to the sacrifice as the peace offering involved a communal meal (Ibid.) that Samuel might *privately* anoint one of Jesse's sons as king, 1 Samuel 16:3a,b. (iii) God then led Samuel to anoint David *privately* in the presence of just his family, 1 Samuel 16:4-13a. (iv) God's Spirit came on David from that day onward, equipping him to be Israel's next king, so Samuel returned to Rama where he continued to live untroubled by Saul and separate from him, 1 Samuel 16:13b,c.

(2) If we **MUST** personally relate to a perilously incompetent leader, like Esther, may we be gracious, respectful and cautious. Daniel exemplified this in relating to wicked king Belshazzar who tried to demean Israel's God by drinking to false gods with wine placed in holy vessels taken from the Lord's temple, Daniel 5:1-6, 13-17. Daniel declined to accept Belshazzar's gifts and rewards for interpreting the handwriting, but he respectfully interpreted it.

(3) If we **MUST** personally relate to a perilously incompetent leader, like Esther, may we wait for God's obvious circumstantial opening of doors of opportunity for action to be sure of God's help in making any petition of the leader. The timing of Haman's entrance into the king's court to request the hanging of Mordecai on the gallows Haman had built for him only to be forced to honor Mordecai publicly both signaled God's reversal of the fortunes of Haman and Mordecai and encouraged Esther that God was already at work, so she could afford to petition the king.

(4) On the issues in our introduction, (a) if we travel in foreign lands, 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12, written to believers in a pagan world, directs us to make it our ambition to live quiet lives, to mind our own affairs and to work with our own hands. (b) The ongoing financial corruption at UConn is a sample of the ongoing financial corruption in many agencies, so we must take a "hands-on" approach to our own finances, be it banking, investing, property ownership, business contracts, retirement portfolios, taxes, etc., being diversified with our resources to limit risk (Ecclesiastes 11:1-2). (c) The perilous incompetence of leaders throughout society **requires** us to govern **ourselves**, to exhibit love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and self-control, against which qualities there is no government law, Galatians 5:16, 22-23a,b. (d) On perilous incompetence in many church leaders, (i) we hold to the priesthood of the believer (1 Peter 2:9), so every believer who relies on the Holy Spirit can read Scripture and know its truth, 1 Corinthians 2:9-16. (ii) Also, God has [a] credible messenger[s] in each era of Church History (Revelation 2-3), so test each messenger[s] and heed the right one[s]. (1 John 4:1-3; 1 Corinthians 2:9-16)

May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life. May we then deal with perilously incompetent leaders by respecting their position while following God's lead in functioning discreetly but also righteously before such leaders.