

## ESTHER: OBEYING GOD IN LEAN AND LONELY TIMES

### Part III: Encouragement To DEEPEN Our COMMITMENTS To God's Will In Lean And Lonely Times

(Esther 1:1-2:23 with 4:10-17; 5:1-8; 7:1-10 and 8:1-8)

#### I. Introduction

- A. Sometimes the absence of godliness in God's people **around** us tempts us away from heeding the Lord: if nobody *else* heeds the Lord, an individual may ask **WHY should he** do so, revealing his **own** slackness!
- B. The book of Esther faces this subject, revealing the awesome **sovereignty** God holds over **all** His people; this makes it **imperative** that the *individual* not only **heed** God, but **ALSO influence others** to do so even if carnality in himself, in other believers or evil in the world around him seems to make it futile:

#### II. Encouragement To DEEPEN Our COMMITMENTS To God's Will In Lean And Lonely Times

- A. The book of Esther records events that took place when God's people were spiritually weak, and when personal obedience **humanly** seemed *laborious* for the **individual** Hebrew:
  1. Though some of the Hebrew people had returned from the Babylonian exile under Cyrus' decree, due in part to their **own** lack of spiritual vitality, they had taken 21 years to rebuild the temple, Bible Know. Com., O.T., p. 699; cf. Ezra 1:1-11; 4:1-6:15 with the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah.
  2. Also, the books of Ezra and Nehemiah reveal these exiles had not followed "the Deuteronomic Covenant and therefore were under God's curse rather than . . . His . . . blessing," *Ibid.*, p. 700.
  3. Besides, many "disobedient people" of the Hebrews had failed to return to Palestine where God wanted them, *Ibid.*, p. 701. Thus, for those who had returned to the land, considering so many had stayed in **comfortable Persia** would have discouraged them in their **hardships** of trying to heed God.
- B. In such a setting, God's sovereign arrangement of events to preserve and prod His people to heed Him would have encouraged **all** the Hebrew people toward **deepening** their *commitments* to God's will:
  1. As we previously learned, events in the book unfold, showing God let the evil Haman threaten the very existence of the Hebrew people in Persia so they might be motivated to return to Israel, Esther 3:1-15.
  2. Hebrews hearing of the events of Esther would have been led by **Esther's growing commitment** to the welfare of God's **people** to focus on heeding His will to return as a **people** to Israel (as follows):
    - a. When Mordecai heard of Haman's plot to destroy Persia's Hebrews and told the matter to Esther, she **FIRST** sought to **AVOID** getting *involved* for fear she might lose her life en route, 4:10-11.
    - b. However, Mordecai revealed (a) such inaction on Esther's part would leave Esther herself dead as a Jewess, so it was in her own interest to risk her life to make an uninvited plea to the king, 4:12-13.
    - c. (b) Besides, Mordecai pointed Esther to her **call**, that her **role** as *queen* had possibly been arranged for her to rescue her people, (c) an opportunity she must not let pass to her shame, Esther 4:14.
    - d. Thus led by Mordecai, Esther chose to make a life-risking, uninvited entrance to the king, 4:15-17.
    - e. However, due to **FEAR**, once she gained the king's favor by her uninvited appearance, Esther **STALLED** in letting the king know of her petition by inviting him to a banquet, Esther 5:1-5.
    - f. At that banquet, Esther stalled **AGAIN**, inviting the king and Haman to a **SECOND** banquet, revealing her **FEAR** of **HARM** were the king not to grant her request, Esther 5:6-8.
    - g. At this point, **GOD encouraged** Esther to **voice** her petition: between the first and second banquet, **God** arranged for **Haman to have to honor Mordecai** to Haman's dismay, a signal to Esther that God would help her were she to fulfill her role of **voicing** her petition, Esther 6:1-14.
    - h. Accordingly, at that **SECOND** banquet, Esther **VOICED** her petition to the king, 7:1-10.
    - i. **Emboldened by this help, Esther did something she at FIRST would NEVER have DARED to do: she made a SECOND UNINVITED COURTROOM appearance to the king, PLEADING BOLDLY with tears and prostrating herself before his feet to overturn Haman's petition to kill her people, 8:1-3. The king held out the scepter to Esther and granted her request, 8:4-8.**

**Lesson:** Since Esther was **CORNERED** and **ENCOURAGED** by life's events to make a **SELFLESS COMMITMENT** to rescue her **PEOPLE**, she **GREW** in her **COMMITMENT TO ISRAEL**, a move that would have encouraged her and her people on their **GROUP** need to obey God in returning to **ISRAEL**.

**Application:** If **WE** see events and people (a) cornering and/or (b) encouraging us to make **DEEPER COMMITMENTS** to God's will, God is **PRODDING** us in that direction, and we ought to **YIELD** to it!