

# Esther 2

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[ 0 : 01 ] Welcome to our service this morning and we'll commence our worship by singing to the Lord's praise from Psalm number 1. Psalm 1 That man hath pepped his blessedness, who walketh not astray, in counsel of ungodly men, nor stands in sin's way, nor sitteth in his goner's chair, but praiseth his delight, upon God's law, and meditates on his law day and night.

He shall be like a tree that grows near planted by a river, which in a season yields his fruit, and his leaf fadeth never. And only doth shall prosper well, the wicked are not so, but like they are unto the chaff which wind drives to and fro.

In judgment therefore shall not stand such as ungodly are, nor in the assembly of the just shall wicked men appear. For why the way of godly men unto the Lord is known, whereas the way of wicked men shall quite be overthrown.

We shall sing the whole psalm to the Lord's praise. Psalm number 1 That man hath pepped his blessedness, who walketh not astray. That man hath pepped his blessedness, who walketh not astray.

In God's love, the way of wicked men shall not stand such as ungodly are, nor stand sin's way.

[ 1 : 44 ] Nor siteth a thinnest for earth's air, but praise of his divine.

Father, may not saddening are, nor do not stand such as ungodly, such as ungodly are, not from theads of the earth.

And then thy voice, may not eth ingeniousness, who walketh not astray. It shall be like a green th wiec it rose, in vibrant white Regard, where Your changers seek COSTA.

And his sweet faith in heaven And all the gods across the land The wicked are not so But I say unto the child Which when thy sin unfold In judgment therefore shall not stand Such a son of the earth Nor in the assembly of the cross

Thou wicked men appear For why the way of holy men Unto the Lord is known Where as the way of wicked men Shall quite be overthrown Let us unite together in prayer Eternal and ever blessed Lord We come before thee this morning And we acknowledge, O Lord

[ 4 : 56 ] The great privilege that thou hast granted to us When we are able to gather together Under thine own word With a desire in our hearts To worship thee And to acknowledge thee As our God We give thanks, O Lord That we can have boldness and confidence To draw near to thee Not because of any merits of our own But in and through thy Son Our Lord and our Saviour Jesus Christ We give thanks to thee That it was he who came Into this world And who took our nature into himself And who went to the cross And there bearing our sins upon himself And receiving what our sins deserved In his own body That he died and that he was buried

And that he rose again And that he has ascended to thine own right hand And there that he ministers on behalf of his people We give thanks, O Lord For his intercession At thine own right hand And we give thanks, O Lord, today For the great promise That thou hast given to thy people For all those who will put their trust in him That he shall return again Not to offer himself as a sacrifice for sin But to gather his people And to bring them in body and soul Into the inheritance that he has prepared for them So that they shall be forever With the Lord And we give thanks that we can have that living hope today And so we pray, O Lord

That thou would accompany the preaching of thy word Among ourselves here and throughout our islands And throughout our nation And wherever people gather together Under thine own word We pray that it may be accompanied By the power of thy Holy Spirit For it is the spirit that quickens The flesh profiteth nothing And we acknowledge today, O Lord And we acknowledge today, O Lord That without thee We can do nothing That we are dependent upon thy spirit To take thy word And to apply it to our hearts So that it may be lodged in our hearts And bring forth evidence In our lives We pray, O Lord That thou would bless the congregation here Every home that belongs to them Every family that belongs to them

Thou knowest our needs far better Than we know ourselves And we pray that Out of the riches of thy grace That thou would meet with the needs of each and everyone We pray, O Lord For thy people Those who have committed their lives to thee We pray that They may be faithful witnesses In this world That thou, O Lord Would grant to them the strength To enable them to be as lights That would be shining In the midst of the darkness of the world That is around us O remember today Those who are careless And indifferent To the claims of thine own word And pray that thy spirit would come And will bring days of conviction Upon them That they may realise Their lost condition And that thy spirit would draw them

To see the sufficiency of Christ To meet with their needs That thou would bring days of revival Within thy church And days of quickening Among those who are dead In trespasses and in sin Remember any who may be ill We pray that thine own Healing hand may be upon them And those who may Have been bereft of loved ones We pray, Lord That thine own comfort Would be their portion today Remember our young people And our children There are many things To entice them And to draw them away From the gospel But we pray, O Lord That thou would raise up A generation That would fear Thine own name And who would be Thy witnesses here Or wherever thy providence Will set them Remember all thy servants Who have gone forth With thy word this day

[10:04] May they have the unction Of thine own spirit Upon them Granting them the boldness To proclaim thine own truth Knowing that thy word Will not return unto the empty But will accomplish that For which thou Has sent it forth We pray, O Lord That thou would watch over us For the moments That we are together We know that there are Many things that could Distract our minds And our attention away But we pray, O Lord That we may be focused Upon thy word And that we may hear What thou hast to say to us Through thine own word We pray, O Lord That thou would remember Our nation We acknowledge that We have gone far away From thee But may it please thee, O Lord To bring us back To thyself To bring upon us Days of repentance

Days when we would Sorrow over our sin And seek the mercy of God In Jesus Christ Remember all the nations Of the earth O Lord In our day We see so much chaos Confusion and war And we pray, O Lord That thou would bring Order where there is confusion And that thou would Bring peace Where there is war We pray, O Lord That thou would watch Over us now That thou would Accept our worship Through the merits Of thine own son And all that we ask For the forgiveness Of our many sins Is in Jesus' name And for his sake Amen We shall continue singing This time from Psalm 46 Psalm 46 God is our refuge And our strength In straits At present day Therefore Although the earth

From moon We will not be afraid The hills amidst the seas Becast the water Flooring may  
And troubled be ye Though the hills By swelling seas To shed Our river is And streams To  
glad The city Of our God The holy place Wherein the Lord Most high Hath his abode God  
in the midst Of her doth dwell Nothing shall her remove The Lord To her And help her will  
And that right Early prove We shall sing These verses To the Lord's praise Psalm 46  
Verse 1 to 5 God is our refuge And our strength In straits At present aid God is our refuge  
And our strength In straits At present aid That for all of the holy

And every word We will not be afraid The hills amidst the seas Becast Jesusoe True O  
waters open, may I'm proud of thee.

In all her hands, my sweat and sins to shame.

[ 13 : 52 ] A river and her stains to ground, the city of thy God.

The holy place where in the Lord most high the fish of all.

Called in the midst of the earth of the land. Must the nation of the great moon.

The Lord to help and help the world. And the Christ there is new.

We shall now read the word of God as we find it in the Old Testament. In the book of  
Esther and chapter 2. The book of Esther and chapter 2.

[ 15 : 21 ] After these things, when the wrath of King Hasawaris was appeased, he remembered last  
time and what she had done and what was decreed against her.

Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, let there be fair young virgin salt  
for the king. And let the king appoint officers in the province of his kingdom.

That they may gather together all the fair young virgins into Hushan the palace. To the  
house of the woman. And to the custody of Hecate, the king's chamberlain.

Keeper of the woman. And let their things for purification be given them. And let the  
maiden which pleased the king be queen instead of Bashti. And the thing pleased the king  
and they did so.

Now in Hushan the palace where there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai,  
the son of Jehah, the son of Shemai, the son of Kish, and Benjaminite.

[ 16 : 21 ] Who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity, which had been carried  
away when the Juchnael king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, had  
carried away.

And he brought up Hushan, that is Esther, his uncle's daughter. For she had neither father  
nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful.

Who Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter. So it  
came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many  
maidens were gathered together into Shushan the palace to the custody of Hichai, that  
Esther was brought also into the king's house to the custody of Hichai, keeper of the  
woman.

And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him. And he speedily gave  
her her things for purification, which of such things as belonged to her, and seven  
maidens which were meet to be given her out of the king's house.

And he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the woman.  
Esther had not showed her people nor her kindred, for Mordecai had charged her that she  
should not show it.

[ 17 : 38 ] And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the woman's house to know how  
Esther did, and what should become of her. Now when every maid's turn was come to go  
in to King Hasawaris, after that she had been twelve months according to the manner of  
the woman.

For so were the days of her purifications accomplished, to wit, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and with other things for the purifying of the woman.

Then thus came every maiden unto the king, or so of it should his side was given to her, with her out of the house of the woman into the king's house. In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the woman, to the custody of Shancas, the king's chamberlain, who kept the concubines.

She came unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name. Now for the turn of Esther, the daughter of Apno, the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go into the king.

She required nothing but what Hegai, the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the woman, appointed. And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her.

[ 19 : 00 ] So Esther was taken into king Hasawares, and to his house royal, in the tenth month, which is the month of Beth, in the seventh year of his reign. And the king loved Esther above all the woman, that she obtained grace and favour in his sight, more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti.

Then the king made a great feast into all his princes, and his servants, even Esther's feast. And he made a release to the province, and gave gifts according to the state of the king.

And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai sat in the king's gate. Esther had not yet showed her kindred, nor her people, as Mordecai had charged her.

But Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him. In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, Ibiza and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wrought, and sought to lay hands on the king, Hasawares.

And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told it unto Esther the queen. And Esther satisfied the king, therefore, thereof in Mordecai's name.

[ 20 : 21 ] And when the position was made of the matter, it was found out. Therefore they were both hanged on a tree, as it was written in the book of the Chronicles, before the king.

May the Lord bless unto us the reading of that portion of his word, which I now sing from Psalm 27, and at verse 11.

Psalm 27, at verse 11. O Lord, instruct me in thy way, to me a leader be, in a plain path, because of those that hatred bear to me.

Give me not to mine enemy's will, for witnesses that lie, against me risen are, and such as breathe out cruelty. I fainted heart, unless that I believed had to see, the Lord's own goodness in the land, of them that living be.

Wait on the Lord, and be thou strong, and he shall strength afford, and to thine heart, yea, do thou wait, I say, upon the Lord. We shall sing these verses, to the Lord's praise, Psalm 27, verse 11, to the end of the psalm.

[ 21 : 29 ] O Lord, instruct me in thy way, to me a leader be. O Lord, instruct me in thy way, to me a leader be.

O Lord, to me a leader be.

I will sing, if you know six apanules in thy way, by me a bandit, O Lord, My name is well, all witnesses of life.

All against me, with sound and answer, I'll speak the truth of thee.

I fainted by the last of thy, Be in your heart to see.

- [ 22 : 51 ]    The Lord's own breath, And stand the love, Offer the faith, bring me.  
 With all the Lord, and be thy stone, And ye shall set the hope.  
 Come to thy heart, Get your love away, I say upon the Lord.  
 Seeking the Lord's help and blessing, Let us turn back to the chapter that we read in the Old Testament, The book of Esther, And chapter 2, And we'll read again verse 16.  
 So Esther was taken unto king Hasaweras, Into his house royal, In the tenth month, Which is the month of Tibet, In the seventh year of his reign.
- [ 24 : 10 ]    And the king loved Esther above all the women, And she obtained grace and favour in his sight, More than all the virgins, So that he set the royal crown upon her head, And made her queen instead of Vashti.  
 The book of Esther is one of two books that is named after a woman, The other being the book of Ruth.  
 Esther, along with the book of Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, Relate to a particular period of Jewish history, That is the return of the exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem.  
 There were three returns of the Jews within an 80 year period. The first was under the leadership of Zerubbabel, The second under Ezra, And the third under the leadership of Nehemiah.  
 But not all the Jews returned from Babylon. Some stayed. The book of Esther gives to us an account of the events, Faced by the vast majority of Jews, Who had not chosen to return, But who had chosen to remain in Persia.
- [ 25 : 33 ]    The timescale of the whole book would be around ten years, From around 483 BC to 473 BC. Around 16 years after the return of Zerubbabel, The first return of the exiles.  
 And 15 years before the return of Ezra. And along with the first five books of the Bible, And the book of Daniel, It is the only book to be set entirely outside the promised land.  
 Its setting is in Persia. Its setting is in Shushan in Persia. However, unlike the book of Daniel, The book of Esther shows very little interest, Whatsoever in the promised land.  
 Its main uniqueness belongs to the fact that it does not mention the name of God. In fact, not only does it not mention the name of God, But it also seems to go out of the way to avoid any religious themes and practices other than fasting.  
 There is no mention of prayer. There is no mention of worship. There is no mention of sacrifices. Nevertheless, as Matthew Henry marks, That though the name of God be not in it, His finger is.
- [ 27 : 09 ]    The whole events recorded in the book are under the sovereign hand of God. There may be much speculation as to why the name of God is not found in the book.  
 But I think the simple answer to that is that his name is not in the book because he did not want his name to be there.  
 By not putting his name, he may be teaching us that in the events of life, When God is apparently absent, or we feel that he is absent, He is not absent.  
 He is there. He is the sovereign Lord in his hands at our times. You don't have to add his name to everything to explain his presence.  
 For he is omnipresent. He is everywhere. He can be seen in this book to be at work in the first chapter in the refusal of first time to her husband's demands.
- [ 28 : 26 ]    Esther to be chosen to be queen to a heathen king. Mordecai overheard the plot to assassinate the king. Even to the sweet partners of the king and of things that the king could have read out of the chronicles anything.

But he reads the account of Mordecai's loyalty in disclosing the plot that was against his life. Everything in the book is under the sovereignty of God.

Everything in the book is under the control of God. It reminds us that when God may appear to be absent in my life and in your life, that he is not absent.

He is at work. God is involved in all that transpires on the earth. As we look at the world today, we may think it's all in chaos.

And to our minds it is in chaos. And to our reasoning it is in chaos. And yet, God is sovereign. And he is involved in all that transpires on the earth because he is working out his reflective plan.

[ 29 : 43 ] The book of Esther is a historical work. A true account of events that took place in this particular part of the world at a particular time.

And they are recorded for us as part of God's revelation to us. God wants us to know about those events that took place in Persia over 2,500 years ago.

But what is it that makes an event that took place over thousands of years ago in Persia? How is it relevant to us this morning?

Although the book has many lessons to teach us as to live within a hostile environment that wants us to conform to their ways and norms and shows us how we are under God's care and protection.

Nevertheless, to fully understand the book of Esther as it is true of all scripture, then we have to look at it in the light of the big picture.

[ 30 : 52 ] And what is the big picture? We must take what we have here and look at it in the light of redemptive history.

God is working out his redemptive plan for his church. And what has been given to us here in the book of Esther is part of God's unified plan as he works out his plan in all of history to unite all things in Christ.

So it is important for us that when we read an ancient account like this, that we are aware of the fact that God is working everything out according to a unified plan of his own, beginning in eternity and moving to eternity, and that it is all wrapped up in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Esther is God's story and God's story always leads us to Christ and the cross.

Another matter that we should remember here and brought before us here as in other places is how the very purposes of God in the plan of redemption is going to be opposed.

[ 32 : 23 ] And you will find that there are characters all the way throughout the Old Testament who is essentially seeking to do the devil's work. And later on in this book, Haman, a man by the name of Haman, is one such person.

This portion of history recounts a classic attempt by Satan to destroy the purpose of God for the coming of his Son into the world to bring about the redemption of the church, the redemption of sinners like me and you.

From the very beginning, Satan has been working to destroy the redemption of God in saving his people through the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour.

We know that this is not only true of the Old Testament, but we see it in the New Testament as well. For instance, we see soon after the birth of Jesus, how Satan was behind Herod in the slaughtering of the innocent babies in Bethlehem.

It was an attempt to kill the child Jesus. Satan was trying to keep Jesus from fulfilling his mission of redemption.

[ 33 : 54 ] And you know, if Haman, whom we come across here in the book of Esther, had been successful in his plan, and his plan was the destruction of all Jews throughout the whole empire, and that included those who had returned to Jerusalem.

And he came very close. The Jewish people would have been destroyed, and the saving work of God promised him and through the descendants of Abraham would have come to an end.

There would be no fulfilment in Christ. There would be no salvation for sinners. There would be no gospel to be preached. However, as we have already noted, through all these acts of correspondence, God was fulfilling his plan for all of history.

Now we know that the principal character on this stage is God. However, there are other characters that is brought before us who are subordinate to the principal character.

There is King Asaweras, there is Queen Varshti, there is Mordecai, there is Esther, there is Haman, and many others throughout this narrative.

[ 35 : 18 ] But the principal character on this stage is God. The principal worker in the book of Esther is God.

Although his name is not mentioned, and he would seem as if he was absent. Yet he is there, and he is working. As Matthew Henry said, although his name is not in the book, his finger is in the book.

Now, Asaweras, the king, inherited the throne from his father Darius I, and the book opens with his celebrations in the third year of his reign.

He is clearly a very powerful king, ruling over 127 provinces, from India to Ethiopia. And undoubtedly the great feasts that he made, recorded for us in the first chapter, which lasted for 180 days, were intended to proclaim his power, to proclaim his authority, and possibly was also aimed at gaining support for his plan to attack Greece.

Feasts are a great feature of this book, beginning with one and ending with one. Now, the term used for feasts is one associated with drinking, which may suggest that it is more of a drunken party.

[ 36 : 46 ] And in his drunken state, King Hasaweras decides that he wants to show off his wife's beauty. So he commands Queen Vestai to appear before his maimed guests.

He ordered to bring Queen Vestai before them wearing her royal crown, only wearing her royal crown, in order to display her beauty to the people and the officials, for she was a beautiful woman.

Vestai, the queen, receives the summons, while she is in a separate place, in a separate court, hosting a banquet for the woman of the court.

But when she receives the summons, she refuses to comply. And when King Hasaweras is informed of the queen's refusal, he is furious, he is angry, for his power and authority is, of course, undermined by the queen's refusal to attend his party.

And he asked several of his noblemen who was there at the party how he should punish the queen for her disobedience. After all, if the king does not deal with her harshly, other wives in the kingdom might get ideas and refuse to obey their own husbands.

[ 38 : 06 ] And taking the advice of his counsellor, he had her deposed. And at the same time, he sent proclamations throughout the land, declaring that the husband is the ruler in every household.

Now, as created, finite beings, we cannot see beyond that historical moment. What the people of that day could not possibly see is how God is at work right there and then.

John Flavel said that God's providence is like the Hebrew language. It's best read backwards. There is no explanation or reason for the queen's disobedience.

However, in the light of the events that is taking place, it is clear that her disobedience or her insubordination, the stage is set for Esther's rise to prominence.

So we come to chapter 2. And there is a period of several years having passed between chapter 1 and chapter 2.

[ 39 : 32 ] Historians fill the gap for us, as they record for us an ill-fated naval conflict with the Greeks, known as the Battle of Salamis.

Now he has come back from that battle. And he's probably very cast down because he lost that battle with the Greeks.

And that conflict probably left him feeling very cast down. King Hasawirus.

And that's the wrath that now finally subsided, as he remembers, would regret his dealings with Vashton. And that could not be at all reversed.

He had deposed her. And that could not be now reversed. And he now regrets what he did to the Queen. Historians write that after he returned from the Battle of Salamis, that the King consoled himself with his heron.

[ 40 : 38 ] That is the way it always says. When we try to bury our regrets of things we have done that cannot be reversed, and we try to console ourselves in the pursuit of the pleasures of sin.

And that will never bring us to peace. Here we have a pagan king. And the way of true peace he does not know.

And so he tries out casual relationships with women. However, the context shows us that whatever consolation or satisfaction he sought from from his sensual pleasures, that he does not bring him to any lasting satisfaction whatever.

We live in a world where a vast number of people, even under the gospel, are ignorant of the way of peace. What do we find?

Are people who are restless, maybe because of remorse and regret, and they try to console themselves and casual relationships and sinful pleasure in the pleasures of a flesh.

[ 41 : 57 ] And the Word of God reminds us of the deceitfulness of sin, that sin can be very deceiving. But what is actually real and true is that these methods never come to bring us through peace.

And so here we find King Hasawirus. And he immerses himself in these methods. But he never comes to a place where he has lasting satisfaction or true peace.

How often these casual relationships ends up in a mess, in a distrust, even violence and destruction. However hard King Hasawirus tried to console himself in his pleasures, in his sinful pleasures, it brought no true peace and no true satisfaction.

Here is a man who has everything in the standards of the world. He has wealth and as many women as he pleases. And yet, he is miserable, unhappy, sad and empty of true satisfaction and of true peace.

At this point, his servants advise him to begin to look for another queen. And so officers are appointed from all the provinces of his kingdom to gather all the beautiful virgins in the kingdom, whether they were willing or unwilling.

[ 43 : 33 ] They are to come, they are to bring them to Shuzan. They are to bring them before the king. Where they would be lavished upon for a whole year with various oils and perfumes and oils to perfect their beauty before they would be brought in to meet with the king.

From among these beautiful women women, the king would choose his new queen. This again was not the best advice.



It was actually a sinful advice. But it was an advice that they knew would please the king and leave them popular with the king. The crux of the matter is that they were building up sin upon sin.

They were treasuring it for themselves and the king wrath against the day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. It brings before us how careful we must be in the way we advise people.

How easy it is to give the wrong advice in order to remain popular and to please others. And that's what the counsellors or the king's servants are doing at this time.

[ 44 : 52 ] They were giving him the wrong advice but they wanted to be popular with the king and they knew that the advice they were giving the king would please them. There is nothing to commend either the king or his advisors in this matter that is before us.

Evil and sin is written all over it and yet we can see the sovereignty of God overruling for into this scene enters Esther and Mordecai.

The point of the narrative is to bring before us how God is working out in Providence the bigger picture of his redemptive plan all pointing to Jesus Christ.

Esther was her Persian name her Jewish name was Hadashah this name changing was common among those who were brought into exile and we find the same with Daniel and his three friends when they were brought into the Babylonian exile.

Esther she was a young orphan girl whose mother and father had died when she was relatively young. Needless to say the reality of her becoming queen or prominent in any sense of that matter would seem virtually impossible.

[ 46 : 20 ] Mordecai again is Persian name we are not told of his Jewish name he was a man very much respected and obviously a God-fearing man he was Esther's older cousin who takes Esther into his custody and cares and nourishes her as his own daughter in verse 5 to 7 we are given very precise details about Mordecai where we are told that he was a Jew from the tribe of Benjamin.

Now Esther was one of the women noticed by the officers obviously because of her beauty and he was brought or taken by them into the king's house.

Sometimes people entertain that it was Mordecai's idea that she entered into this competition but that is not true. She is taken and there was nothing that herself or Mordecai could do and Mordecai is very concerned about her well-being as we see in verse 11.

There is a sense in which for Esther and Mordecai this is becoming a very dark providence and this is becoming a great trial for their faith.

Well may we say where is God? Here is Esther and she is taken up and brought to the king's house. Where is God in all this?

[ 47 : 50 ] He may appear to be absent but the reality is that he is working. He is there. It reminds us that when God may appear to be most absent in our lives that he is there he is at work.

Even when providence may seem to be very dark and the trials that comes upon us for our faith God may appear to be absent but he is not absent.

God is always setting the stage for that glorious end which he purposed in himself. Though the process of him may seem difficult and hard and painful but the outcome is guaranteed.

Remember what he said regarding the children of Israel as they travelled through the wilderness to the promised land. It says and Moses reminds them on the border of the promised land he reminds them and he says to them to remember the God who led you through that great and terrible wilderness wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions and drought.

These were hard providences hard dark providences but it was in order to bring them good at their latter end and to bring them into the land that was flowing with milk and honey.

- [ 49 : 32 ] Although it was painful for them and daft for them to go through the wilderness with so many dangerous things confronting them yet it was to do his people good at the latter end and to bring them into a land that was flowing with milk and honey.

All this is working out to the glory of God's wisdom and God's deliverance and indeed it is a dark period in the life and experience of Esther.

So Esther is taken along with the other woman to the king's house not because she desired to be there or that she wanted to be the wife of a pagan king or the queen of a heathen nation.

Nevertheless this indeed would be a trial for her faith. For 12 months she was going to be surrounded by people who had no sympathy whatsoever for her faith.

She was going to be pampered every day with oils and ointments and perfumes in order to perfect her beauty and all this would add to its own temptations for her.

- [ 50 : 53 ] It is interesting but we are given no answer as to why Motecaia commanded Esther to conceal her background. In verse 10 we read Esther had not showed her people nor her kindred for Motecaia had charged her that she should not show it.

That is brought twice before us in the chapter. We are not aware at this point that the Jews were being targeted or threatened by the Persian authorities although later on in the story we come across a man named Hammond and he planned to kill all the Jews throughout the empire.

He was bent on destroying the entire Jewish population that was existing in the Persian kingdom. It could be that Motecai was aware of the coming storm.

We simply do not know why he ordered this concealment that she was a Jew. Many interpret the command of Motecai as an order that he gave to Esther to conceal her faith.

But I think we must be careful at this point. What he actually told her was to conceal her identity as a Jew.

- [ 52 : 24 ] In other words, her nationality, her Jewishness. We can conceal her nationality without necessarily concealing her faith.

I can conceal my Scottishness or that I'm British, but that doesn't necessarily mean that I am going to conceal my faith in Jesus Christ.

I can conceal my nationality without concealing my faith. And I think that was what Motecai was asking Esther to do.

Conceal your nationality, conceal your Jewishness. But he didn't ask her to conceal her faith. Whatever the reason was for Motecai's command to her and whether it was simply her Jewishness and not necessarily her faith, at best we could speculate, but I think the wisest thing would be to reflect upon our own lives.

Has there been time when you and I have concealed our relationship with God that we are Christians? If it ever came to a point of personal survival, would we be ready to deny that we are Christians?

- [ 53 : 39 ] Would we compromise and justify ourselves by saying that it means justify the end? It brings before us that the right decision in the right manner is not always an easy thing.

However, we do know that it is commendable for us not to deny our relationship with God. I believe that what Esther was doing, I am of that opinion, that it was her nationality, her Jewishness, that she was concealing and not her faith.

We must remember that God's people are not perfect. They are people who are striving to perfection. If there is anyone who knows about concealing to the point of denying who they are and their relationship with Jesus in the New Testament it is Simon Peter.

On the night of Jesus' trial, Peter had three opportunities to affirm his love and support for Jesus, but on all three occasions he chose to conceal the truth by denying even with curses that he ever knew Jesus.

J.C. Ryle offers wisdom in his thoughts on the Gospels, and he cautions us and he says, let us settle it in our minds. that there is nothing too bad for the very best of us to do unless he watches, prays, and is held up by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 55 : 11 ] Our environment, whether we like it or not, does have an impact upon us. We are not immune from the things that are around us.

Here we find Esther and she is not immune from the environment in which she finds herself, surrounded by a people who have no sympathy whatsoever for her faith.

faith. She is in a hostile environment as regarding her faith. But what we find in Esther is that her attractiveness is not merely physical, but that she possesses and maintains a character that endears all who meets with her.

verse 9, Haggai, keeper of the woman, and the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him, and he gave her things for purification with such things as belonging to her, and seven maidens which were meant to be given her out of the king's house, and he preferred her and her maids into the best place of the house of the woman.

And there in verse 15 we read, And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all that looked upon her. Now I don't think that was just meant regarding her physical attractiveness, her physical beauty, but there was something in her character that attracted the attention of others, so that she obtained favour in the sight of all into whose contact she came.

[ 57 : 07 ] who had interaction with her, all who looked upon her. How important it is for us when we find ourselves in an environment that is not sympathetic to our fear, to be watchful and close to God.

Otherwise, little by little, here and there, we shall be tempted to compromise, and soon our Christian character will be lost. but here in this narrative, it seems to be otherwise for Esther.

She maintained her faith and character, and it would have been easy for her, for she was founded by a culture that was hostile to all that she believed, but in spite of all that, she did not compromise her faith or her character.

Was her physical beauty that caused why she found favour with Haggai, the woman and the king? I don't think so. I don't think it was her physical beauty that caused them to show favour to her at all.

I think the reason was that she found favour of them is that it found something that was so different in her character with the other women. who came from a pagan, hostile environment to the faith that was so dear to Esther.

[ 58 : 38 ] There was something different about this woman. There was something different about this young girl, Esther. She was so different to the other woman that was there in the king's house.

They found an element of attractiveness in her character. character. We ourselves can go alongside a person and find qualities in her character that pulls us towards them.

Some attractiveness in their character, and that does not necessarily apply merely to Christians. We can go alongside non-Christians and find something that is quite attractive in their character that pulls us towards them.

And I think it was something like that that was taking place here. There was something in Esther. She was different.

There was a distinct difference with Esther. She was so different to the other girls and the other woman that was in the king's house.

[ 59 : 47 ] And it was all down to this. Her faith. Her faith. It is vital in our Christian witness in an environment that is not sympathetic to faith that we behave in such a way that we are seen to be different.

She behaved in such a way she was seen to be different. She was seen to be distinctive. There are distinctives in the Christian life. We are to be distinct from those who are not Christians.

We are to be distinct from the world. The world ought to see something in us that is different.

That is distinctive. And that was to be seen in Esther. She was distinctive. She was different to the others. She was behaving in a different way.

Our character is to be Christ like. We are to show forth the fruit of the spirit that indwells in us such as love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

[ 60 : 55 ] We are to be compassionate towards others. When we do that, the world around us takes notice.

As it was in the case of Esther. Those around her took notice that she was distinctive, that she was different. In the case of Esther, there was not merely an outward beauty, but there was an inward beauty.

However, pagan and in those around her were attracted by her inward beauty. What was inward was made manifest in some way outwardly.

And if we have the beauty of Christ in our hearts, then it must be made manifest in some way outwardly. This was what was happening to Esther and that attracted those people in such a way that she found favour in their sight.

Above the fragrance and odours that filled the king's house, there was a fragrance around Esther that those around her saw, felt, but could not understand.

[ 62 : 21 ] The inward beauty of her faith was being made manifest outwardly and those around her couldn't understand what it was, but she was different.

There was something different about her. We are told in the Gospels that when Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with a pound of ointment of spicing that the house was filled with the odour of the ointment but it was nothing in comparison with the fragrance that rose from Mary's heart and that was seen by the Lord.

Judas Iscariot smelt the odour of the ointment like the rest and he objected and counted it as waste but the Lord saw much deeper and he smelt a fragrance of faith a fragrance of love a fragrance of devotion and so he justifies Mary in her deed and he says leave her alone she has done all that she could she has done all that she could it was a fragrance of faith love and devotion and there is a fragrance seen in Esther's life that those around her are seen although they cannot understand what it is it's not easy to live distinctive lives it's not easy to be different from others the world cries out to us and the world says everyone does it why can't you do you really want to be the odd one out do what you want for a change that's what the world cries to you do what you want for a change you only live once enjoy yourself it won't do you any harm

God will understand that's what the world cries out but the motivation to live a distinctive and different life is surely to be found at the cross of Golgotha when you survey that cross and when you have some understanding of the cost of salvation and look forward to his coming again because he is coming again surely that will give you the motive to live a distinct and different lifestyle to the world to the world of disarrangement Jesus who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from this present evil age her faith left Esther to be different it was her faith that was her motive to live a distinct and a different lifestyle to those who were around her to the other woman so

Esther is a lesson for us it's a lesson for us of not only how God cares of us how he takes care of us in providence how he leads us to fulfill his all redemptive purpose how it is a lesson for us how we should live in a hostile environment and not to compromise in the midst of cultural pressures and there is cultural pressures upon us in our day not to be distinctive not to be different but we are not to compromise there is a cultural pressure upon Christians today to compromise but we must stand fast we must not compromise in the midst of cultural pressure and the challenges and the temptations Esther faced those temptations for 12 months she was surrounded by pagan women a hostile environment she had all these oils and perfumes and ointments they were all temptations for her to compromise but she did not compromise in the midst of cultural pressure challenges and temptations it's a lesson for us how we are to behave how I and you are to behave it's not easy

[ 66 : 56 ] I'm not saying it is easy but if we remain our closeness to God it is rewarding and in the case of Esther she became queen she never thought that would ever happen but she became queen and she was used as a means to change the course of history in the sense of that she saved the Jews Haman wanted to destroy all the Jews not a Jew to be left in the world and if he had been successful there would be no Christ there would be no salvation there would be no gospel but Esther was used as a means to prevent that she was made queen and she saved the Jews she made the way for Jesus to come into the world she made the way for salvation to be procured for sinners she made the way for the gospel to be preached today in this place

Esther was used as a means she had her reward we must always remember Esther she was a link in the persuasion of the Jews which allows us to have a gospel today she received her reward she became queen and she has received a greater reward than that you see if we maintain our closeness to God our distinctiveness it has its rewards may the Lord bless our Lord let us pray eternal and ever blessed Lord we give thanks unto thee that thou art the sovereign Lord and that thou art working out thine own eternal purpose and that that purpose will be fulfilled in that day when Christ will come again and will bring his people to be with himself we pray

Lord that thou would grant us the grace and the strength to enable us to be distinctive that people will know that we are the Lord's that we belong to thee we pray Lord that thou would grant us the grace and the strength to be true and faithful witnesses for thee in a world that is in darkness and that is hostile in an environment that puts us under pressure and challenges us for that thou strength would be in thee we pray Lord that thou would go before us in all things and all that we ask is for the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ Amen we shall conclude by singing from Psalm 65 at verse 4 Psalm 65 verse 4 blessed is the man whom thou dost choose and makes approach to thee that he within thy course O Lord may still dwell at thee we surely shall be satisfied with thy abundant grace and with the goodness of thy house even of thy holy place and we shall sing down to the end of the verse

Mark 5 verse 4 and 5 blessed is the man whom thou dost choose and makes approach to thee blessed is the man whom thou dost choose and makes approach to thee that he is in life in waters all are mixed and that dwell and be we surely shall be satisfied with thy abundant grace and rest rest of thy hands in of thy holy place

O God of our salvation thou in thy righteous hand whom shall hop come proced to of hearing whose us and h go down and by m The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore. Amen.