

God's Perfect Timing

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[0 : 00] Now, if you have Bibles with you, I'd like to read from Esther chapter 6. I'm going to read the whole chapter.

The context is that Haman, the wicked Haman, is planning to put to death Mordecai, who has insulted him, not binding to him.

And Esther, of course, in her plans, she's committed her plans to God, that God would save her people, the Jews, whom Haman has decided to put to death.

And his plan, of course, will be thwarted by God. But God will use, and God uses individuals to work through his purposes. So let's take up the account again from Esther chapter 6.

On that night, that's the night that, or the day of which Haman had planned to put Mordecai today.

On that night, the king could not sleep.

[1 : 04] And he gave orders to bring the book of memorable deeds, the chronicles. And they were read before the king. And it was then written how Mordecai had told about Bethana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs who guarded the threshold, and who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus.

And the king said, What honor or distinction has been bestowed on Mordecai for this? The king's young men who attended him, saying, Nothing has been done for him.

And the king said, Who's in the court? Now, Haman had just entered the outer court of the king's palace to speak to the king about having Mordecai hanged on the gallows that he had prepared for him.

And the king's young men told him, Haman is there, standing in the court. And the king said, Let him come in. So Haman came in, and the king said to him, What should be done to the man whom the king delights to honor?

And Haman said to himself, Whom would the king delight to honor more than me? And Haman said to the king, For the man whom the king delights to honor, let royal robes be brought, which the king has worn, and the horse that the king has ridden, and on whose head a royal crown is set.

[2 : 24] And let the robes and the horse be handed over to to one of the king's most noble officials. Let them dress the man whom the king delights to honor, and let them lead him on the horse through the square of the city, proclaiming before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor.

Then the king said to Haman, Hurry, take the robes and the horses you have seen, and do so to Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king's gate.

Leave out nothing that you have mentioned. So Haman took the robes and the horse, and he dressed Mordecai, and led him through the square of the city, proclaiming before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor.

Then Mordecai returned to the king's gate. But Haman hurried to his house mourning, and with his head covered. And Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him.

Then his wise men and his wife Zeresh said to him, Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of the Jewish people. You will not overcome him, but will surely fall before him.

[3 : 40] Well, they were yet talking with him. The king's eunuchs arrived and hurried to bring Haman to the feast. Esther prepared. Amen.

May God add his blessing to that reading of his holy word as we turn to that passage that we read, as we consider the whole matter of God's perfect timing.

God's perfect timing. As we see our points, our three points to follow.

The perfect timing, the perfect timing of God, God who does all things well. And then secondly, the pride humiliated in Haman and humility exalted in Mordecai.

And then the last part that we read there, the prophecy of righteous punishment. We read of Haman, who will not stand before a holy God.

[4 : 40] And we have to be reminded, we have to be reminded of the truth that we find in God's word, the truth that God is sovereign, that God's ways are perfect.

Even the very events of your life, they're not random occurrences of coincidence. God, the eternal God has loved you with an everlasting love.

The God who has loved you, he guides you. He guides your life in every aspect of it. Even the very circumstances of your life so that with the apostle Paul, you can truly see you who know him and love him.

You can see that all things do work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose. And it's the seeming coincidental events that so often we sometimes just brush aside as mere happenstance, as mere chance.

But they're not mere chance. They're never mere chance. They're not chance occurrences in the book of life that God has written for you. God has a purpose for you.

[5 : 56] God controls the sovereign. God controls every event in your life, every minute aspect of every timing in your life. And we have that assurance then.

He's with you always. That truth came to me very strongly on Tuesday night, just a few nights ago, at our presbytery, Edinburgh Presbytery meeting.

And at the beginning of every presbytery, some of you will know, the moderator of our presbytery reads from a passage of scripture. And it so happened that that evening, the moderator, Tom Muir, Tom read from Exodus chapter 2.

And it was very much a word in season. And the context of Exodus 2 is that the Israelites are facing oppression in Egypt under Pharaoh.

And amidst that oppression, we read at the end of Exodus 2 that God heard, God remembered, God saw, and God knew.

[7 : 02] And your life that's hidden in Christ, you whose life by faith is hidden in Christ, pray that you'll realize it, that you'll have that comfort to realize that God hears, God remembers, God sees, and God knows.

That he knows every detail of your life under his sovereign care and in his perfect timing. Even as we see that happening in the events played out in the book of Esther, the story that we're focusing on, we've been focusing on for the last good number of weeks, the story focused on Esther and the Jewish inhabitants of the Persian Empire.

God hears the pleadings of Esther for her and for our people, people who've been condemned to die under the hands of wicked Haman. But God hears, God heard the pleadings of Esther.

God remembered his covenant with his people. God saw their affliction. And God knew their circumstances. And that, if you like, is the big picture, the big picture of God's care over his people. But inside that big picture, within that big picture, there's what we might call a microcosm, a microcosm of love. That love that's focused on individuals.

[8 : 29] God's love focused on individual believers. Even as we see here in the life of Esther's cousin, Mordecai. Mordecai has been condemned to die by wicked Haman because Mordecai has refused to bow down to Haman.

Haman's pride has been insulted. And it seems that it's just inevitable that Mordecai's fate is sealed. Haman's built a gallows 75 feet high on the advice of his wife and others.

And it seems just that it's going to happen. Mordecai is going to be put to death for his slight on Haman. But while man might plan against God and his people, God rules and God overrules.

The very day when the plan of Haman and his wife was being hatched, that very day was the same day under God's all seen providence that Mordecai's life would be saved.

And what appears to us to be extraordinary circumstances are not extraordinary circumstances because they're circumstances under God's perfect timing. So let's look at that aspect of God's perfect timing as we see in the passage.

[9 : 51] As we see particularly in the first three verses. There's a chain of events that is happening. And these events that appear disconnected, in fact, events that are linked together under God's all seen providence, under his sovereignty.

And look at the links. The first link in the chain is the king's sleeplessness. Now, in one sense, there's nothing remarkable about that.

We all suffer from sleeplessness at times, and certainly in the Middle East in the heat of that particular place. Sleeplessness would be very much a factor. But for the king, his sleepless night was a link in the chain of events under God's great divine purpose.

The king's not been able to sleep. Somehow, somehow it causes him to ask his officials for a book of chronicles, an official record book of events under his reign.

He asks somebody to read the book to him. They were not told why he wanted that particular book, but ask for it, he does. And unaware to himself, of course, the reading of that book is going to change the course of the life of Mordecai and change the course of the life of Haman.

[11 : 16] Because in that record book were written daily events, I suppose, a bit like an official diary. Events of the king's reign and the official response to these events.

And included in that book would be recorded the various rewards that the king gave to various individuals for their particular work and their particular loyalty to the king.

But for some reason, the person reading this book, and for some reason, of course, under God's providence, the person who's reading this book to the king turns to events that happened five years previously.

It seems from a human perspective that the book was opened at a random place. The place that so happened to be the place where it was recorded that Mordecai the Jew had saved the king's life by reporting on the plot to kill the king's person, the plot hatched by two of the king's officials.

And, of course, the book would indicate that nothing was done at the time to reward Mordecai. Five years on from that event, the king's troubled. He's been reminded that this man, Mordecai the Jew, that he saved his life.

[12 : 33] But there's nothing in the records to say that Mordecai was ever rewarded for his actions. Maybe the time that that event happened, the saving of the king's life, maybe it was an oversight.

Maybe it was a genuine error. Of course, it was all under God's providence, all under his sovereign care. The very fact that Mordecai hadn't been honoured these five years previously was absolutely crucial because it wasn't the right time for God to act in his perfect plans.

It was the right time for Mordecai's reward was at the very moment that would have greatest impact on the saving of his life and on the putting to death of Haman.

And as we read again in these opening verses, Haman, we read, it just so happens to be around the king's palace when the king hears about Mordecai. Haman just so happens to want to discuss with the king the putting to death of Mordecai, hanging him in the gallows that he's built.

Here's Haman, the king's second in command whom the king calls into his presence. You see the chain of events that ordinarily would have appeared so disconnected, the king not being able to sleep, reading a particular part of the Chronicles and then Haman appearing about to tell the king about his plan to execute Mordecai.

[14 : 04] Events that seem from one level to be utterly disconnected, unconnected, but yet absolutely within the perfect plan of God for not just the saving of Mordecai, but the saving of God's people.

We mentioned earlier Haman just happened to be in the king's presence, the king of the palace. But of course, things that seem to just happen don't just happen under the sovereign control of our unseen, invisible God.

And you know, of course, we can bring that to human events and God's providence. We can see in the events of human history, even the events of God's people, even in the lives of individuals, your life, my life, God's grace showered upon you at particular times for particular reasons.

When God's mighty hand of love is shown in his perfect timing for his glory and for the good of those who are his. So don't be surprised at the way that God works for your good.

Don't be surprised when he works for your good and the maturing of your faith and you're being sanctified by the power of the Holy Spirit. Don't be surprised when events happen for the good of his people, for the glory of God's name.

[15 : 28] Because all too often it's as if the various providences that God gives us in our life are somehow reckoned us as extraordinary, somehow out of the normal, out of the normal working of God.

But in fact, we ought to be constantly thanking God for the way that God has worked in our lives and continues to work in our lives in bringing all things together for good.

And I pray that you'll be assured and encouraged and comforted with that truth and even to contemplate how God has led you this far.

Think particularly of what we might call delays. I mean, there's Mordecai. Mordecai, we might say indirectly, had saved the king's life at five years previously to the chapter that we read.

Normally, the action that Mordecai had carried out would have been rewarded instantly. But it's taken five years for that reward to happen as we're going to see in a moment.

[16:33] So from a human perspective, a delay, but no delay in God's perfect planning. Of course, we see that ultimately in the coming to earth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus, as the Savior promised in Old Testament times. Prophets foretold of the coming of the Christ, the Messiah.

Prophets who looked on by faith. Prophets who knew that the promise of God, the promise of a Savior to come was sure, was certain.

Even though the fulfillment of that promise would happen, will not happen, in the lifetime of those who prophesied of Jesus coming. Remember, it was no delay.

It was no delay in Jesus coming to bring about salvation for his own. And Paul tells us that in Romans 5, verse 6, that at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.

[17:34] at the right time. It wasn't a day, nor an hour, nor a year, nor a century, nor a millennium. Too soon, nor not a day, nor an hour, nor a century, millennium.

Not too late. And the Lord Jesus, as he came the first time in God's perfect planning, his return also will be at the right time.

And there'll be no delay in the coming, the returning of Christ, in God's perfect timetable. And God even, we have to say, is giving even us now that time, God in his patience is giving us that time to come before him in repentance.

Giving that time for sinners to come and repent and turn to the Saviour at just the right time. Now bring that truth into your own life. There's other times when we've become so impatient with God's timing in our lives, whether it's as individuals or as a church.

We want something now and now isn't God's now. Maybe we cry out for a particular blessing. In fact, that blessing's already been given to us in God's unseen hand upon you.

[18:53] God giving you his love, his presence, his strengthening of your faith. How many times have you asked God for something and he said, wait?

That waiting, so often, that waiting, not so often, always is a waiting under God's perfect timing. Because so often in that waiting, there's that maturing of your faith, that strengthening your trust in God who does all things well.

And for Mordecai, his five-year wait, we might say, for justice was a waiting under God's perfect timing. It wasn't a day too soon, it wasn't a day too late.

Because it had to be in that particular evening, of all evenings, when the king's sleeplessness caused him to seek his records to be read to him and in fact, finding out that Mordecai hadn't received the justice, hadn't received the reward that he ought to have received.

Perhaps there's maybe a waiting, a particular time of waiting that even now you're experiencing. Maybe you can't fully understand why there is this particular time of waiting.

[20:06] Why even at this particular moment? Remember, God hears, God remembers, God sees, and God knows.

That's for each one of us to rest in that all-embracing wisdom. Yes, for such a time as this, for God's time, God's perfect time.

It's perfect timing. But then, secondly, in the passage we read of, well, two connected things, pride humiliated and humility exalted, as we see certainly verses 4 to 11.

It's just as with the king's sleeplessness that caused him to ask for that book of records to be read to him and to be read at just the right time to save Mordecai. So for the presence of Haman to, well, the very next morning, being there, there's that link, another link in the chain of Mordecai's deliverance.

I mean, Haman has already feasted with the king and Esther. he's obviously in high spirits and he's coming to the court now again, and we might say in good measure to tell the king about his plan to hang Mordecai later that day.

[21 : 25] And all seems in Haman's favor. And we know that he's already been invited to another banquet that the queen has promised to give just for himself and the king.

And so we can just read Haman's mind as he thinks, well, surely it's only a matter of time before that Mordecai is done away with, and I'm going to be exalted again.

And so we see that when the king starts to speak about rewarding somebody with, someone whom the king delights to honor, you can just see how Haman's pride, his arrogance, immediately thinks that it's himself that the king's referring to.

You see there Haman's self-centered pride, and he thinks that, well, he thinks of some great display of some personal favor that's going to make him the more associated with the king.

Everyone's going to see the part whom the king is going to honor, dressed in the royal robe, riding on the king's horse, having the king's crown upon his head.

[22 : 36] And for good measure, another nobleman dressing him in these royal robes, just to indicate his power, his greatness. Little does Haman know that the seeds of his own downfall are within himself, but they are in his own arrogant heart, in his own arrogant pride.

because his own assessment of what the king should do to the one whom the king delights in, it's actually an assessment that's going to lead to Haman's humiliation, that's going to precede to Haman's destruction.

In other words, we find in Proverbs 16, 18, that we know so well, we're seeing played out in this example of Haman, pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall, pride comes, pride goes before a fall.

And Haman's unaware that the one whom the king delights to honor is actually Mordecai the Jew.

You can just again imagine that Haman's face and his mind, as he hears the king speak to him, as he reads in verse 10, get the robe, the horse that Haman suggested, and then as he thinks that the king's going to say, it's you Haman who am I delighting?

Instead, the king says, array Mordecai in that robe. Lead Mordecai through the streets and proclaim, this is what's going to happen to the man whom the king delights to honor.

[24 : 18] And then when Haman leads Mordecai through the streets, you just see the shame, the wounded pride, the downfall that's there, that man whose pride had elevated him to some kind of illusion, illusion of greatness, only for his power to come crashing down and bring him to destruction.

because Haman's God, because God was himself. And it was Haman's God that actually was demolished by the king.

This is the same king who had bestowed honor on Haman, the same king who some hours later would condemn Haman today. You see, Haman in his arrogance, Haman had sought glory for himself, and now he's been told by the king to direct people's praise to Mordecai.

There's Haman humiliated. His pride has been assaulted. But Mordecai, Mordecai, the humble Mordecai, has been exalted. This is all under God's perfect providence, God's sovereign purposes. So a total reversal's happened. The man who assumed an exalting before the king, he's humiliated.

[25 : 42] The man for whom the humiliation of violent death was expected, he's now exalted. You know, that's the way of God's justice.

Think of what Jesus said when Jesus was speaking, speaking about the arrogant Pharisees in the way that they conducted themselves. Matthew 23, 12.

Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. And Jesus, of course, expressed that same truth in the parable he taught of the tax collector and the Pharisee. Remember in that parable, the two of them praying. The Pharisee exalting himself in his prayer, in his exhibition of self-righteousness. the humble tax collector, not even raising his head, but just beating his chest and saying, Lord God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

And Jesus concluding in that parable that it was the humble tax collector who was justified, the humble tax collector who was exalted before God, and it wasn't the arrogant Pharisee who thought that he was righteous in himself.

[27 : 00] and the concluding statement of Jesus in that parable. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.

So let's be warned. Scripture gives us many warnings, and we have a warning here. Be warned both in maybe some whom you admire, and be warned too in how you conduct yourself.

pride in self, pride in so many areas, whether it's pride in self, or pride in a denomination, pride in a culture, pride in an identity, that pride contains seeds of humiliation before God.

Because it's God alone who's exalted, and to be exalted in his greatness. you see that Haman-like arrogance. Well, we see it in any who condemn a believer.

But those who condemn the Lord's people will find that that arrogance rebounds on themselves, if indeed in this life they haven't given their life to the Lord Jesus and repented of their sin.

[28 : 15] Because all who exhibit that arrogant pride are actually doing that, to exalt themselves above God, above the Lord Jesus. And, of course, God's word tells us that all who seek to exalt themselves above God will know an eternal humiliation in the place of eternal punishment, the place of hell.

And I'm saying that not with any rejoicing. I say that with grief and desolation. desolation at those, even those whom we know, we love, but who will not humble themselves before the God of all grace, they won't do it, we will reject the grace of the Lord Jesus.

Let also have that joy at the prospect of exaltation and glory for all who are humble and who are humbled in heart, humble before the Lord Jesus.

We see that humility highlighted in Mordecai. There he is, he's been at the king's gate, he's now dressed in the king's robe, he's riding on the king's horse, he's wearing the king's crown.

It's an honour that very few people were actually given at that time. I don't know what a modern day equivalent might be, but it could be something like one of us riding in the carriage reserve for the queen, things of the state opening of parliament, for example, giving the crown jewels to possess for a time.

[29 : 48] But the point is, Mordecai hadn't looked for honour, but he was given honour and given honour just at the right time to indicate, well, his loyalty and the Jewish people's loyalty to the king.

At the same time, that was going to bring humiliation to heaven and indicate his worthlessness and his fall. people. Because, again, we come back to the word of God that tells us that those who honour God, God will honour.

Who do you honour God? You honour God by a true exercising of faith. You honour God by acts of obedience. You honour God by a heart of grace that follows the Lord Jesus.

You do it. You honour God through a heart of gratitude, a heart that doesn't look for selfish gain, a heart that seeks to glorify the Lord. You honour God by remaining humble before him and humble before others.

It might be an aside, but we see Mordecai showing that even after he's been paraded through the streets and with all the royal insignia around him. What does he do? He returns to the king's gate.

[31 : 07] He's been honoured by the king, but that doesn't go to his head. He may well have been clothed in the king's robe, but his true garment was the garment of humility.

And you know, the honour that God gives to all who are his, it's an eternal glory, that glory in heaven itself. You know, Peter, when he wrote to the church, he wrote that when the chief shepherd appears, when Jesus returns in his glory, you'll receive the crown of glory that shall never fade away.

And all whom God honours, all whom God honours with salvation on earth, we're promised to reign with Christ eternally. That honour isn't an honour that we derive by ourselves, it's not an honour that we have by any right that we have.

it's not by any action that we've done to deserve that honour. The honour that God gives is all of his grace. And if us go looking for the honour that God gives, Mordecai didn't look for any honour, and neither should we.

We know from God's word that your faithfulness to the truth, your obedience to God's word, it does have its reward. There's a present reward, that reward of being in Christ, the privilege that you have as a believer to be hidden in Christ, that's a reward, a glorious reward.

[32 : 44] Knowing and having that communion with him, of course we know that eternal, that promise of an eternal reward and the presence of our Lord and Saviour in glory forever.

if the reality of our current reward is in Christ, in him, as he blesses us, it's a present blessing we know, but there's that prospect of glory in heaven, the prospect, as we said, of that crown of life eternally.

But for those who won't bow the knee to the Lord Jesus, there's a present reality and an eternal prospect.

But it's not a prospect of honour, it's not even a present reality of honour, because there can only be the reality of a Christless living now, and an eternity without Christ.

That's what we see in the example of Haman in these final verses of chapter 6, the prophecy of righteous punishment. It was after Haman has done what the king asked him to do, to parade Mordecai through the streets.

[34 : 03] He's in torment. He's been humiliated beyond all humiliations. The very man that he hated, the very man that he thought he was going to put to death that evening.

He's having to proclaim publicly that this is the man whom the king delights to honour. All his plans are in ruins for his putting to death Mordecai.

His pride has been demolished. And then his wife and his advisors, his counsellors, they tell him that well, with Mordecai being a Jew, and the Jews being the people of God, they're telling him now that you're finished.

As we read, he'll surely fall before Mordecai, because he sought to destroy Mordecai. And in their own words, they're telling him that his downfall is sure, his life is in ruins, his end is in sight, and his pride truly has come before a fall.

And so, well, we're going to leave this section of the book of Esther, and leave it with a solemn warning. And the warning is this, that all who would continue to oppose the Lord Jesus with all that they are, the promise is that all who oppose their Saviour will fall, will surely fall.

[35 : 28] Downfall guaranteed, downfall because of a persistent, continuous hatred against God and his people. And yes, we thank God and praise God that there's forgiveness for all who repent, for all who turn to the Lord Jesus, who turn from their sin and turn to the Lord Jesus for salvation.

We know that in Scripture, we know that in so many examples of life. Apostle Paul, for example, he turned from being a persecutor of the Lord's people to one who proclaimed the Lord Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Savior, such as you who've been drawn to the Lord Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. You've turned from sin to the Saviour.

For those who won't and ever will worship Jesus, who won't and ever will follow the Lord Jesus as Saviour, there's only the prospect of eternal ruin.

That's why chapter 6 ends on a note of warning, because we see at the end of that chapter the irreversible downfall of the person, of the one who unashamedly attacked the righteous, the righteous Mordecai, and of course by implication attacked God himself.

[36 : 52] There was no turning back for Haman. So there's this stark warning for all who yet haven't turned to the Lord Jesus for salvation.

I pray that none of you are the authors of your downfall as Haman was the author of his downfall. I pray that you'll turn to the Lord Jesus before it's too late.

You'll turn to him and be saved, and that you'll know that fellowship with him forever, and that you'll enjoy the favour of God both now and eternally, that you'll know him who hears and remembers and sees and knows and knows you.

Our Lord, our God, our Heavenly Father, you who truly do hear us and see us and remember your people and know us.

You know us better than we even know ourselves. Lord, we commit to you our lives. We pray indeed for loved ones who as yet have not given their life to you.

[38 : 06] We pray, Lord, that they will truly be turned in their heart and come to that saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus by faith. Hear us, Lord, as we continue in worship before you.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.