

“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered (amazing). Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows. Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward. And whosoever shall give drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.” (Mat. 10:28-42.)

Beloved, these verses articulate a most remarkable law of the Kingdom of God and/or Heaven. Listen and absorb the doctrine; to wit: *“And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water ONLY in the name of a disciple, VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU he shall in no wise lose his reward.”* Amazing! (Matt. 10:42.) Does not the Savior thereby teach the whole world that it is a fearful thing to mistreat the lowliest member of His church militant? Does not the Savior also thereby teach that a humble cup of water may have infinite worth — depending on the circumstances of its use? Or, its misuse? — for time and eternity? John Bradford was taken from the Tower of London, put on trial, and condemned to die by fire, for preaching in England, in January, 1555; and on July, 1555, faggots were piled high about Bradford, who was thereby torched and burned to death pursuant to the Queen’s order. Fox’s Book of Martyrs details hundreds of such, to which many thousands of the Spanish Inquisition victims be added; alongside those *“Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire...being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy)...”* (Heb. 11:33-38.)

These, though dead, yet speak to us — through Scripture, through such fragments of biography as it has pleased the dear Lord to leave us here and there in His Word — and, through such extended bits of providence, to cause Flavel to say that, he who observes providence will never be long without a providence to observe. The man who can walk through the world, and see no God, is said upon divine authority to be a fool; but the wise man’s eyes are in his head; he sees with an inner sight, and discovers God everywhere at work. It is His joy to perceive that the Lord is working according to His will in Heaven, and earth, and in all deep places. All Scripture is given by inspiration, and is profitable whether it be history or doctrine. E.g., as explicated by Charles Haddon Spurgeon in his sermon “Providence – As Seen In The Book Of Esther.”

God never meant the book of Esther to lie dumb, and whatever it seemed good to Him to teach us by it, ought to be our earnest endeavor to learn. The Lord intended by the narrative of Esther's history to set before us a wonderful instance of His providence, that when we had viewed it with interest and pleasure we might praise His name, and then go on to acquire the habit of observing His hand in other histories, and especially our own lives. It has pleased God at different times in history to startle the heathen world into a conviction of His presence. He had a chosen people, to whom He committed the true light, and to these He revealed himself continually; the rest of the world was left in darkness, but every now and then the divine glory flamed through the gloom, as the lightning pierces the blackness of tempest. Some by that sudden light were led to seek after God, and found Him; others were rendered uneasy, and without excuse, though they continued in their blind idolatry.

The wonderful destruction of Pharaoh and his armies at the Red Sea was a burst of light, which startled the midnight of the world by giving proof to mankind that the Lord lived, and could accomplish His purpose by suspending the laws of nature, and working miracles. The marvelous drama enacted at Shushan, the capital of Persia, was intended to be another manifestation of the being and glory of God, working not as formerly, by a miracle, but in the usual methods of His providence, and yet accomplishing all His designs. It has been well said that the Book of Esther is a record of wonders without a miracle, and therefore, though equally revealing the glory of the Lord, it sets forth in another fashion from that which is displayed in the overthrow of Pharaoh by miraculous power.

Let us come now to the story of the Providence of God — As Seen In The **Book Of Esther**. There were two races, one of which God had blessed and promised to preserve, and another of which He had said that He would utterly put out the remembrance of it from under heaven. Israel was to be blessed and made a blessing, but Amalek, the Lord had sworn that the Lord would have war with Amalek from generation to generation. These two peoples were therefore in dead hostility, like the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, between whom the Lord Himself hath put an enmity. Many years had rolled away; the chosen people were in great distress, and at this far-off time there still existed upon the face of the earth some relics of the race of Amalek; among them there was one descended of the royal line of Agag, whose name was Haman, and he was in supreme power at the court of Ahasuerus, the Persian monarch.

Now it was God's intent that a last conflict should take place between Israel and Amalek; the conflict which began between Joshua in the desert, to be finished with Mordecai in the king's palace. This last struggle began with great disadvantage to the Lord's people. Haman was Prime Minister of the far-reaching empire of Persia, the favorite of a despotic monarch, who was willing to let Haman do about anything he wanted to. For many centuries, destruction of the Jews was mostly what every Amalekite pined for. Many Muslims feel the same way today. Mordecai, a Jew in the employment of the king, sat in the king's gate; and when he saw proud Haman go to and fro, he refused to pay to him the homage which others did, and it came into his mind that Mordecai was a Jew; and with the remembrance came the high ambition to avenge the quarrel of his race. He thought it scorn to touch just one man, and resolved that in himself he would incarnate all the hate of generations, and at one blow sweep the accursed Jews (as he thought them) from off the face of the earth.

He went into the king, with whom his word was power, and told him that there was a peculiar people scattered up and down the Persian empire, different from all others, and opposed to the king's laws, and that it was not for the king's profit to suffer them. He asked that they might all be destroyed, and he would pay into the king's treasury an enormous sum of money to compensate for any loss of revenue by their destruction. He intended their neighbors to kill them, and that the part allotted to himself should repay the amount which he advanced; thus he would make the Jews pay for their own murder. He had no sooner asked for this horrible grant than the monarch granted it, taking his signet ring from off his finger and giving it to Haman. The chosen seed of God — the Jews — are now in the hands of their bitterest enemies — the Amalekites.

“Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake. Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.”(Isa. 54:15-17)

We shall see what happens, and learn from it. First, we learn from the narrative that God places his agents in fitting places for doing HIS work. The Lord was not taken by surprise by Haman's plot; He had foreseen it and forestalled it. It was needful, in order to match this cunning, malicious design of Haman, that a Jew should possess great influence with the king. How was this to be effected? If a Jewess became Queen of Persia, the power she would possess would be useful in counter-acting the enemy's design. This had to be arranged years before Haman concocted his wicked scheme of murdering the Jews. Esther, whose sweet name signifies myrtle, had been elevated to Queen of Persia by a singular course of events.

It happened at a certain drinking bout, when the king sent for his queen, Vashti, to exhibit her to the people and princes. No one would dream she would disobey the tyrant's word when ordered to make a spectacle of herself before the ribald rout of drinking princes. But she refused and for her courage, Vashti was divorced and a new queen was sought for. We cannot commend Mordecai for putting his cousin in competition for the job, as it is contrary to the law of God, and dangerous to her soul in the highest degree. It would have been better for Esther to be the wife of the poorest man of Israel than to have gone into the den of the Persian despot. The Scripture does not excuse, much less commend the wrong doing of Esther and Mordecai, but simply tells us how divine wisdom brought good out of evil. Esther in the king's house was the means of defeating the malicious adversary. But Esther alone would not suffice; she is shut up in the harem, surrounded by her chamberlains and her maids, but quite secluded from the outside world.

A watchman is needed outside the palace to guard the people of the Lord, and to urge Esther to action when help is needed. Mordecai, her cousin and foster-father obtained an office which placed him at the palace gate, where much royal business will come under his eye, and he is both quick, courageous, and unflinching; never had Israel a better sentinel than Mordecai, the son of Kish, a Benjamite - a very different man from the other son of Kish, who had suffered Amalek to escape in former times. His relationship to the queen allowed him to communicate with her through Hatach, her chamberlain, and when Haman's evil decree was published, it was not long before it reached her ear and she felt the danger that Mordecai and all her people were exposed to.

By singular providences the Lord placed those two most efficient instruments in their places. Meanwhile, there is a conspiracy hatched against the king, which Mordecai discovers, and communicates to the highest authority, and so puts the king under obligation to him, which was a needful part of the Lord's plan. Whatever mischief may be brewing against the cause of God and truth, the Lord knows all about it, and He has His Esther and His Mordecai ready at their posts to frustrate their designs. The Lord has His men well placed, and His ambushes hidden in their coverts, to surprise His foes. We need never be afraid but what the Lord has forestalled His enemies, and provided against their mischief.

Every child of God is where God has placed him for some purpose, and the practical use of this first point is to lead you to inquire for what practical purpose has God placed each one of you where you are. You have been wishing for another position where you could do something for Jesus: do not wish anything of the kind, but serve Him where you are. If you are sitting at the King's gate there is something for you to do there, and if you are on the queen's throne, there is something there; do not ask either to be gatekeeper or queen, but whichever you are, serve God therein. Brother, are you rich? God has made you a steward, take care that you are a good steward. Brother, are you poor? God has thrown you into a position where you will be the better able to give a word of sympathy to poor saints. Are you doing your allotted work? Do you live in a godly family? God has a motive for placing you in so happy a position. Are you in an ungodly house? You are a lamp hung up in a dark place; mind you shine there.

Esther did well, because she acted as an Esther should, and Mordecai did well, because he acted as a Mordecai should. God has put each one of you in the right place, even as a good captain well arranges the different parts of his army, and though we do not know his plan of battle it will be seen during the conflict that he has placed each soldier where he should be. Our wisdom is not to desire another place, not to judge those who are in another position, but each one being redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus, should consecrate himself fully to the Lord and say, "Lord, what would thou have me to do, for here I am, and by thy grace, I am ready to do it."

Forget not then the fact that God in His providence places His servants in positions where He can make use of them. Second, the Lord restrains his enemies. Haman, gained a decree for the destruction of all the Jews on a day certain. He was anxious to have his cruel work done thoroughly, and being very superstitious and believing in astrology, he bade his magicians cast lots that he might find a lucky day for his great undertaking. That day was not found till hard by the close of that year, and the thirteenth day of the twelfth month. The magicians told their dupe that the heavens would be propitious. Truly the lot was cast into the lap, but the disposal of it was of the Lord. You see there were eleven clear months left giving Mordecai and Esther time to turn around and reverse the cruel decree. They had space to do it. In the secret chamber where sit the sorcerers and the man who asked counsel at the hands of the infernal powers, the Lord Himself is present, frustrating the tokens of the liars and making diviners mad. Vain were their enchantments and the multitude of their sorceries; the astrologers, stargazers and monthly prognosticators were all fools together, and led the superstitious Haman to his destruction.

"Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, nor divination against Israel..."
(Num. 23:23)

Trust in the Lord ye righteous, and in patience possess your souls. I love you. Amen.