**A Turn of Fate: God’s Supremacy**

**Esther 5-7**

October 16, 2016

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For those who love God and are called according to His purpose, all things work together for good. This is a promise that is acutely challenged by our experiences, so much that it demands a deeper explanation. There is clarity that we all anticipate that will come as we continue our study in Romans. But while we await those future lessons, we’re cheating ahead to get a bit of a vivid sense of what this promise looks like, feels like, tastes like in real life, through the Old Testament story of Esther. It’s a time when God’s people faced great crisis. The tone is gritty. The setting is dire. The name of God is completely absent. But somehow, His fingerprints remain. The silhouette of His artistry cannot be concealed. It is as if the author is proving that in history, just like our lives, even when God goes entirely unmentioned, it’s impossible to miss His signature. Esther is about celebrating the beauty of destiny.

In our first lesson, chapters 1 and 2, they revealed what’s wrong with the world, our depravity, in *Trouble in Paradise*. Chapter 3 exposed where evil comes from, our enemy, in *Rise of the Nemesis*. Chapter 4 revealed our strategy, what to do about it, in *Leap of Faith*. Today, in chapters 5-7 we rest our hope in God’s supremacy and together behold *A Turn of Fate*. By God’s wisdom, our series has been delayed. So after this lesson, we’ll wait to enjoy the final message together in two weeks’ time.

In 1977, one rabbi endured a painful tragedy. His fourteen year old son, Aaron, died from an incurable genetic disease. The rabbi was heartbroken. His grief drove him to a study of how God could permit such pain. Why would God design a world of such wretched evil and suffering? The next year, he released a book entitled *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. It became a New York Times bestseller. Within it he argues that God empathizes with those who suffer due to evil. He does His best to help, but ultimately, He lacks the power to prevent it. The rabbi’s answer is that bad things happen to good people because God can’t stop it. That was his comfort and the hope that he offers. God struggles for control, but sometimes He loses. He does His best, but sometimes, evil wins. He contends that either God is all-powerful or He is all-good. But He cannot be both. Is this true? Is evil a problem that sometimes He can’t handle? Is the greatest comfort a sufferer can know is that God is weak, but at least He cares? Or is there a greater hope?

Esther began with a utopian feast and then this defiant queen incites an arrogant king to banish her by brash decree. Her empty throne is filled by a forlorn beauty named Esther. And then rises this fanatical nemesis whose evil plot, Haman would purge the entire kingdom of all Jews. So, now Esther must beg the king for mercy. It is a move punishable by death. The sober words of her cousin drip with destiny.

**Esther 4:14b** Who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

She knows he’s right. So she gets ready to jump, but not without some concern. She asks everyone to fast for three days--three days for the words to reverberate within. Is this really true? At a time when God has all but vanished, in a land where His name is never mentioned, is it possible He still has a plan? Is it possible He’s still in control? How could any of this work out for good? Everyone experiences suffering. Evil eventually visits us all. Sickness, betrayal, poverty, hunger, tragedy, recession, death. Who is in control? Is every event in your life left to chance, or could it be that there is a plan? Is it possible for God to work this all for good? We’ve discussed our depravity, exposed our enemy, studied our strategy. Today we savor the sweetness of God’s supremacy.

On Sunday, our church bore some heavy news. The message I had intended for last week was postponed until today. Amidst this sobering change of plans, I sat down at my desk and I stared at the words I had typed only hours before. The words are now printed on the page you hold in your hands. It just so happens, that nothing just so happens. Fate always turns according to plan. It’s a truth far harder to swallow today. But I believe as we permit God to speak, these words can offer great hope.

In Esther, there are three turns of fate meticulously crafted by God Himself to reveal His limitless command of destiny. These turns feature so wonderfully God’s supremacy, that they can transform us by simply beholding them. As we look at each turn and behold God’s supremacy, we cannot remain unchanged. When you see God for who He is,

**I. Hang on: Trust in the blunders of God’s timing.**

Scene 1 is An Agonizing Turn. Agonizing means painful, difficult or hard.

My father played basketball in college. I always looked up to him, wanted to be like him and make him proud. In high school, it was my driving passion. I wasn’t very good, but I thought if I worked hard enough, I might be able to play in college. After my Senior year, my coach connected me with his coach from college. It seemed like this might be a fit, and that it may be my best shot at playing at the next level. But that summer, the college let that coach go. They hired someone new. He had a different philosophy and brought in different players. My dream of college athletics was slipping away. I remember calling my dad back in the dorm room and let him know that I wasn’t going to be playing basketball anymore. And he was great. I knew he would be. I knew he wasn’t disappointed, even though I was. Afterwards, I went up on this hill and just layed down and looked at the stars, and I talked with God. I didn’t feel like the way I had played my cards was wrong. I just hurt because of the cards I’d been dealt. There are different things that matter to each one of us, but sometimes fate takes an agonizing turn. In chapter 5, sometimes fate stumps our mind, but if you behold God’s supremacy, actually you can trust in the blunders even of His timing.

1. Delay: when good moves slow (5:1-8)

When the rescue is late, when salvation delays, when hope lags behind, you can trust Him. Esther is on her own, here. Her people are about to suffer annihilation. Her only hope is this appeal for mercy. But the law declares that such an appeal demands death. The system is broken. But she’s the only hope of rescue, so she’s going to take the leap. These are the cards she’s been dealt. She’s going to play them as best she can. That means that the rescue must endure some delay. This wait that is going to ensue, I think it seems a bit appropriate for her. It’s a bit shrewd. She knows what is needed, but it’s also very risky. It’s appropriate, but precarious. I’ll show you what I mean.

Esther is playing the game. It’s the third day of the fast. Nothing special has happened and there is no guarantee but an ancient promise. So, she takes her stand and her appeal is carefully made.

***1*** *On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, in front of the king's quarters, while the king was sitting on his royal throne inside the throne room opposite the entrance to the palace.*

This is an act of courage. She dons her robe. She means business. The former queen, Vashti, was banished for her independent spirit and her failure to show proper respect. But now Esther was chosen because she would probably know her place and give the respect the king deserved. And now she risks ruining that illusion by coming unsummoned after thirty days. And she comes anyway. And her appeal is very carefully made with what she wears and she enters in, and it’s cheerfully accepted.

***2****And when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, she won favor in his sight, and he held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. Then Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter.* ***3****And the king said to her, “What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given you, even to the half of my kingdom.”*

Favor has been won and an offer has been extended. The king is intrigued. For what concern would she risk her life? But this appeal is cleverly delayed.

***4****And Esther said, “If it please the king, let the king and Haman come today to a feast that I have prepared for the king.”* ***5****Then the king said, “Bring Haman quickly, so that we may do as Esther has asked.” So the king and Haman came to the feast that Esther had prepared.*

Her request will be cushioned by a buffet and the invitation is accepted. She is shrewd. She knows how this king ticks. The way to his heart is through his stomach, and she had a meal prepared beforehand. He says, “Cancel my afternoon meetings. Get Haman. Let’s go!” Off to the feast. She’s playing by the rules and flattering the king, but she is also playing with fire because palace intrigue is a very risky game. At any point, Hathach, the messenger from before, could turn her in and gain a handsome reward. But she continues.

***6****And as they were drinking wine after the feast, the king said to Esther, “What is your wish? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled.”* ***7****Then Esther answered, “My wish and my request is:* ***8****If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my wish and fulfill my request, let the king and Haman come to the feast that I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said.”*

Delay! It’s agonizing and it’s risky. It seems appropriate, but it’s very precarious. Why? Maybe the timing wasn’t quite right. Maybe she thinks he needs to be more buttered up. She’s hopping through every hoop. So we, with the king, are left in the air, waiting until tomorrow. Her plea is delayed one more day. There are millions of lives hanging on the balance of this delicate ego that needs another good meal. It’s agonizing! But it’s about to get worse because not only is her plea delayed, but Haman’s plot is about to be accelerated.

2. Haste: when evil moves fast. (5:9-14)

Not only does good move slow, but sometimes evil moves fast. After she postpones her appeal to rescue, Haman accelerates his plot for murder. His delicate ego is momentarily delighted. He leaves the VIP feast.

***9****And Haman went out that day joyful and glad of heart.*

But his euphoric celebration is jarringly disrupted by again, Mordecai.

*But when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he neither rose nor trembled before him, he was filled with wrath against Mordecai.*

“Are you kidding me?” The delicate bubble of his ego has popped. But the fury in his heart is temporarily withheld.

***10****Nevertheless, Haman restrained himself and went home, and he sent and brought his friends and his wife Zeresh.*

He’s going to comfort himself. His honor here is wild. He’s going to pacify his ego by publicly sharing it. He gets his wise men and fortune tellers, his friends and his wife, he gathers them, and then his honor is flaunted.

***11****And Haman recounted to them the splendor of his riches, the number of his sons, all the promotions with which the king had honored him, and how he had advanced him above the officials and the servants of the king.* ***12****Then Haman said, “Even Queen Esther let no one but me come with the king to the feast she prepared. And tomorrow also I am invited by her together with the king.*

In actual dialogue, he emphasizes his joy. Arrogance is blind here. Don’t miss the fact that he’s misreading the signs. He assumes the banquet is for his honor, when it is intended for his accusation. His concern here is the nuisance though, of Mordecai.

***13****Yet all this is worth nothing to me, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.”*

So they respond, “Just execute him early. Take care of him.”

***14****Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, “Let a gallows fifty cubits high be made, and in the morning tell the king to have Mordecai hanged upon it. Then go joyfully with the king to the feast.” This idea pleased Haman, and he had the gallows made.*

The gallows is likely a tall spike on which bodies were impaled and hung. There’s nothing to spark a good appetite like an execution. He’ll get the king’s permission and take care of it. His evil itch is scratched. He’s going to take care of this killjoy, but we know it’s going to backfire. This is what you call planning a roast for the wrong turkey. He just doesn’t know it yet.

But from a human perspective here, it’s very grave. The only hope for Mordecai is Esther’s plea, and it’s been delayed. And all of a sudden, at the worst moment, Haman spots Mordecai and he accelerates his plot. Disaster! Simultaneous delay and haste crash together in the most agonizing of turns. As far as we can see, God has made a terrible blunder. And here’s the point. He’s got it! Behold God’s supremacy. This is actually going to work out for good. This is the mystery of God’s patience. You can take a breath. Relax. The benefit of beholding God’s control is patience. You can hang on and trust in the blunders of His timing.

After I had stopped playing basketball, I had extra time and I happened to step into some friendships and then God gave me time to focus on my relationship with Him and He started to reveal this idolatry and selfishness that had consumed me. And then He opened up this opportunity for leadership that I never would have seen or accepted before. Through that role, He molded me and prepared me exactly for what I’m doing today. It was no mistake. At that time though, I couldn’t see it. It felt like a blunder. I felt like I was outside of God’s will. This is just a small example, but without God, we’re left to question, to demand, to fear, to stress, to despair. When life is up to you, it’s terrifying!

You lock in your rates right before the Market crashes. Or, you lose your job right as you’re having a child. Or worse, you’re deceived into thinking that your big bank account somehow makes you safe and you trust in your abilities, your home, your country, your status. But you know that these are so fragile. And so we’re afraid of whether God’s really in control or whether He actually cares. We’re questioning. And we forget how much of God’s Word is spent proving that He doesn’t need our help.

Joshua marching in circles (Joshua 6). Gideon and his pots and torches (Judges 7). God corners Israel against the edge of a Sea with no escape from attacking Egyptians (Exodus 14). Why? Because for God’s people, the most uncomfortable zone of blunder is the sweet spot for Him to wield wonders. You want to know the name behind the most greatest blunder of all time? Esther is just one part of God’s story. Since the very first man and woman, they’ve been waiting for this child to come, this chosen one, the Messiah, to save the world. And finally He arrives--Jesus. And here He comes, to rescue the world. He is the hope of all mankind. He lives a life without sin. But instead of saving others, He Himself dies. Nothing could have been darker, and yet this is the epitome of God’s plan. It is a blunder. Even His own followers thought He was crazy.

**Mark 8:31-33** And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

He knows best. God thinks differently. He knows that Jesus must come to die in the place of mankind as a sacrifice so that all who believe in Him could be forgiven of their sin and join Him in paradise forever. Jesus beat death and came back to life. Why would God choose such strange ways to reveal His will?

**1 Corinthians 1:21-25** ...it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

No one will boast before God. We will boast in the Lord. This is the hope that we have. Because of Jesus, we can trust in the blunders of God’s timing. We don’t stress when the rescue is late, when the stakes are high, when we’re not getting that encouragement we think we need, that vacation or rest that we want. Because of Jesus, we hang on patiently. We don’t stress. And because of Him, we hang on courageously. Even when danger accelerates or when arrogant people take power personally, professionally or politically, we don’t stress. We don’t panic. We take a breath. We relax. Hang on. We trust even the blunders that God brings. Because it just so happens that nothing just so happens. Fate always turns according to plan. No matter how deep the blunders in your life, you can hang on because Jesus has already proven that the greatest blunder in history is the capstone of God’s plan.

That night, Haman’s men began building this 75 foot high gallows. And it’s almost as if the hammering is keeping someone awake.

**II. Sit back: Rest in the wonder of God’s plan.**

The first turn is agonizing. The second is astonishing, surprising, impressive, amazing!

History is full of these astonishing wonders, accidental discoveries, extraordinary coincidences. In 1916, there was a British student who went up to a used-book stall. He was looking through the books and he saw one that he flipped through a couple times. He never bought it, but finally he got it, sat down, and he read this book. Through this book, this young man came to know God. This young man’s name is C.S. Lewis. He wrote to a friend, “I picked up that book by hazard,” randomly. “But I recognize now that it was clear, God directed my choice even in what I would read.” And later, God uses it to change thousands.

Fate takes an astonishing turn. Sometimes it stumps our minds, but it always serves God’s purpose. Here are four wonders of God that we’ll look to rest in. Chapter 6.

1. Divine influence. (6:1-3)

The active hand of God. You might call this section Sleepless in the Citadel. By the influence of God, the king will make a random discovery that is anything but accidental. And here is God’s influence. It is remarkably intricate and exact. The cause of discovery will be insomnia.

***1*** *On that night the king could not sleep.*

I wonder why! Maybe political pressures from which the queen distracted him? Maybe indigestion from the banquet? Or construction noises from Haman’s courtyard? Who knows? There’s an irony here, though. God usually directs people through dreams, and yet here, apparently where He seems absent, He’s guiding by preventing dreams. God’s influence is exact, but it’s a bit dull. It’s bafflingly ordinary. This discovery is going to be by a book. The king chooses not out of his hundreds of women or an entertainer, but a book of historical records. Why? Maybe like counting sheep, it’s going to help him sleep. Or maybe he’s searching for some kind of oversight. So they read, likely all-night and into the morning.

*And he gave orders to bring the book of memorable deeds, the chronicles, and they were read before the king.*

Only this account rekindles a forgotten memory.

***2****And it was found written how Mordecai had told about Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, who guarded the threshold, and who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus.*

God knows exactly when to keep an Ace up His sleeve and when to pull it back out. The discovery here is of the king’s negligence.

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

Well, that won’t do at all. The king needs advice here. He always needs advice.

***4****And the king said, “Who is in the court?”*

Maybe this is why he couldn’t sleep. This is the wonder of God’s influence, except the king is not the only one who can’t sleep.

2. Divine coincidence. (6:4-5)

Look at how the events unfold. Enter happy Haman, oblivious to his fateful timing. He is bright and early, presumably for the same reason the king is up. They both have unfinished business with Mordecai. But they’re headed for a collision.

*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.* ***5****And the king's young men told him, “Haman is there, standing in the court.” And the king said, “Let him come in.”*

Ordinary circumstances unleash extraordinary results. Coincidence.

3. Divine indulgence. (6:6-11)

To be indulgent means to do exactly what you want, especially when it involves pleasure. It’s usually a negative connotation and I’m using it here to try to catch your attention because this is such an amazing insight to God, that I can’t help but use it. It’s this rare showcase of artistry, this dose of humor, even. It’s as if God can’t help Himself but to help you to enjoy this moment. This is what you might call a stolen dream, where Haman mistakenly forfeits his favorite fantasy to his enemy. And this is poetically just. The author is begging you to smile. A question is asked and an assumption is made.

*6 So Haman came in, and the king said to him, “What should be done to the man whom the king delights to honor?”*

Haman’s been waiting for this his entire life. And he makes an illogical jump.

*And Haman said to himself, “Whom would the king delight to honor more than me?”*

This is painfully ironic. God’s indulgence is not just fair, it’s funny. The extent of the mistake is a bit humorous. Haman won’t let the opportunity go to waste.

***7****And Haman said to the king, “For the man whom the king delights to honor,* ***8****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.* ***9****And let the robes and the horse be handed over 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.’”*

For a random question first thing in the morning, this answer is surprisingly inspired. If the king had gotten more sleep, I’m sure he would have been more suspicious. This suggestion borders on seditious treason. He’s asking for everything except for the queen. It’s a mock coronation. And the result of Haman’s mistake is this command.

***10****Then the king said to Haman, “Hurry; take the robes and the horse, as you have said, and do so to Mordecai the Jew,*

Surprise!

*who sits at the king's gate. Leave out nothing that you have mentioned.”*

Can you feel Haman’s shock? And the king rolls over and goes back to sleep. “Ahhh! Finally!” And Haman enters his worst nightmare. By his own words, the honor for which he longs will never come to him. His pride triggers his own downfall.

***11****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.”*

No words are recorded between Haman and Mordecai. I’m sure both were stunned! No words were needed. This is the most awkward ride in the history of royal processions, so tense and bizarre. You almost suspect that the entire parade happens without a single moment of eye contact. And they end and Haman comes back and we see the wonder of

4. Divine assurance. (6:12-14)

God’s unbreakable promise. After the king’s random discovery and Haman’s mortifying mistake, he receives an ominous warning. He hardly notices that the roles have begun to reverse.

***12****Then Mordecai returned to the king's gate. But Haman hurried to his house, mourning and with his head covered.*

It’s here that God’s assurance is made plain. To all of his friends and even to his wife, it’s unavoidably apparent

***13****And Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him.*

And here’s the key hinge, maybe of the entire book. Prep for the most important verses. This assurance, this promise is ironically spoken by the mouth of the enemy’s wife.

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

If this is that God of the Jews, you’ve got no chance. Because this is not about Mordecai. This is not about good guys and bad guys. This is about God. Mordecai is not innocent. The morality has been ambiguous. He’s saved not because of his righteousness, but because of his relationship. Mordecai is a Jew. This is not a book about bad people getting punished and good people getting rewarded. It’s not “why do bad things happen to good people?” It’s “why do good things happen to bad people?” Mordecai is not necessarily good, but he is God’s. And that’s the point! God has a promise to save His people. And He keeps His promises. And if you go against God, you lose. Period! And once the roles start to reverse, this omen is predicted and the second feast begins suddenly. Haman is just summoned. What began as the best day of his life, soon becomes his last.

***14*** *While they were yet talking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and hurried to bring Haman to the feast that Esther had prepared.*

This is the mystery of not only God’s patience, but the creativity of His providence. God’s got it! You can take a breath, relax. He’s got it! You can take a seat and rest and watch Him work. The second benefit of seeing God is confidence. Behold the wonder of His plan.

Do you ever feel like life is out of control? Like everything is spiraling away? I do. How do you handle that? Do you look for escape? Or do you lash out and attack? Or some combination of both? Do you retreat to substances, entertainment, sleep or friends or food? Do you attack with sharper suits or cleaner desks or stricter workouts, healthier diets, pricier makeup, harder work? Many of these can be good gifts, but they can never replace your God. Our chance to find rest is in the loving arms of providence. It’s not in our works, but in our relationship, our Savior. Without God, you’re left with a life full of questions and a desperate desire for control. So we stress, the anxiety, we work to no end, afraid of how things are going to turn out. God knows a better way. Jesus suffered the worst blunder to reveal God’s greatest wonder, the centerpiece of God’s wisdom. And it’s through Him that all things both on earth and in heaven will be united.

**Ephesians 1:7-12**In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

He makes no mistakes. There are no flukes. God knows what He’s doing and we rest in that.

**Psalm 30:5** For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.

God does this so that our praise goes to Him. No matter what happens, it just so happens, that nothing just so happens. Fate always turns according to plan.

**III. Watch out: Brace for the terror of God’s wrath.**

We’ve seen an agonizing turn, an astonishing turn, the next turn is alarming. It’s scary! Once our guilt is discovered, terror is on the way. It’s like when the teenager leaves all the dishes unwashed and then he hears the garage door open when mom and dad comes home. Terror! You laugh now, but it’s scary. You recognize that judgment is coming. And it gets more serious as life goes on. Later on, you see the lights and sirens behind you, or later on you realize suddenly that you accidentally CC’d your boss on an inappropriate email. All of a sudden you recognize that justice is coming. You sense terror.

Here’s what happens in chapter 7, scene 3. Fate takes an alarming turn. Brace for the terror of God’s wrath. Here are three terrors to brace for.

1. Sudden reality. (7:1-6)

Here’s the shocking reveal! The king’s initial offer is repeated.

***1*** *So the king and Haman went in to feast with Queen Esther.* ***2****And on the second day, as they were drinking wine after the feast, the king again said to Esther, “What is your wish, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled.”*

And Haman is oblivious of what is about to happen. The skill of her reveal here is masterful. It’s in a relaxing context. It’s very respectful and flattering. She doesn’t forget etiquette. And it is focused not on her personal concerns, but more about the king’s concerns, his queen and the financial loss. She is sensitive to his culpability. She is gentle here.

***3****Then Queen Esther answered, “If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be granted me for my wish, and my people for my request.* ***4****For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. If we had been sold merely as slaves, men and women, I would have been silent, for our affliction is not to be compared with the loss to the king.”*

And the sudden reality becomes clear. The king’s vengeance is aroused. Even though those key words should have prompted him to recall that edict he had signed, he’s unaware.

***5****Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther, “Who is he, and where is he, who has dared to do this?”*

Finally the enemy is identified and the blame is assigned to Haman.

***6****And Esther said, “A foe and enemy! This wicked Haman!” Then Haman was terrified before the king and the queen.*

Horror sets it! This is emotionally complex. There may be shame over his appointment of Haman to office. There might be guilt over his approval of that plan. There may be anger because of Haman’s threat to the life of his queen. He doesn’t know what to do because he is utterly dependent upon his advice. And what do you do when your chief adviser has been accused? You take a walk. So, he does a loop around the garden. Brace for the terror of

2. Certain destiny. (7:7-10)

This is even silent destiny. We move from Esther’s plea to Haman’s penalty, from a shocking reveal to a fitting retribution.

***7****And the king arose in his wrath from the wine-drinking and went into the palace garden, but Haman stayed to beg for his life from Queen Esther, for he saw that harm was determined against him by the king.*

Haman grovels! An arrogant bully becomes a whining coward. He is terrified! And the king is marching through the rose garden in reflection. “Was Haman planning this from the beginning? Cheating me out of my money? Maybe tricking me to wipe out this nation? Or maybe it was he that wanted to wear my robes. This smells like treason.” And the king returns and what does he find? Haman falling on the couch on top of his queen.

***8****And the king returned from the palace garden to the place where they were drinking wine, as Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was. And the king said, “Will he even assault the queen in my presence, in my own house?” As the word left the mouth of the king, they covered Haman's face.*

This is the second time his head is covered. His destiny is set and it is just. It’s almost self-directed retribution. At the worst moment, a eunuch exposes Haman’s scheme. Apparently that spike was public knowledge. Maybe he built it a bit too high.

***9****Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs in attendance on the king, said, “Moreover, the gallows that Haman has prepared for Mordecai, whose word saved the king, is standing at Haman's house, fifty cubits high.”*

“This traitor would rape my wife and would murder my rescuer all in the very same day?” True to form, the king accepts the suggestion of the eunuch and impales Haman on his own pike.

*And the king said, “Hang him on that.”* ***10****So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the wrath of the king abated.*

Now listen, God is patient.

**Ezekiel 33:11** As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live…

**2 Peter 3:9** The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

This story is not about a deficiency in God’s patience. It’s about the audacity of Haman’s persistence. He had chances to turn it around. There were key warnings here. Even the prediction of his own wife and friends. But there comes a time when it’s finally too late and Haman will reap what he has sown. And after the shocking reveal, the fitting retribution, we witness the dawn of a sudden reversal. Chapter 8. Now that his vizier is gone, just like when Vashti was deposed, a replacement is needed. You might call this section under new management. We brace for the terror of sudden reality, of certain, silent destiny and

3. Stewardship brevity. (8:1-2)

This is the fact that nothing is ours and it can change hands in an instant. The property transitions.

***1*** *On that day King Ahasuerus gave to Queen Esther the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had told what he was to her.* ***2*** *And the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.*

The authority has shifted. Recompense has now come. We’ve seen the mystery of God’s patience. We’ve seen the creativity of His providence. This is the agility of His recompense. His justice is executed with supernatural finesse. It’s like a laser-guided missile. It skips right over His children, perfectly smiting His enemy. You can take a breath and relax. You can take a seat and rest, but do not fail to take a hint and show respect. The final response to God’s control is reverence. You watch out and embrace for the terror of His wrath.

The greatest protection from the terror of wrath is always the fear of the Lord. Without God, the world is driven to questioning, desperate for control, and doomed to corruption, without any sort of reverence for God. Why is trust so low, skepticism so high, integrity and character long forgotten? What makes wisdom rare and foolishness rampant? Because so precious few fear the Lord. He is holy and He promises wrath upon sin.

**Psalm 75:2** At the set time that I appoint I will judge with equity.

**Psalm 75:7-8** but it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another. For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed, and he pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs.

This is intended to be scary! The wrath of God is reserved for evil to drink from the last drop. So what do we do when we are afraid? We ready for some good news. The Gospel! The fact that on our behalf, Jesus would suffer and drink that cup for us. When we see Haman and his face covered and lift that veil, the face we should see is ours. We deserve to be impaled. We deserve God’s justice. The terror of the king is ours. And yet, we have a Savior who went and He was cursed and hung on a tree for our behalf. Peter tried to stop it. He took out his sword to fight, and Jesus said

**John 18:11** So Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?”

It was prophesied long before.

**Isaiah 53:4-6** Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

**2 Corinthians 5:21** For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

**Galatians 3:13** Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”

Jesus was pierced for us. By His wounds, you have been healed. He is our only hope.

**1 John 1:8-9** If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

God gives us His word. He bore our wrath on the tree so that we might not live to sin, but to righteousness, Romans has been telling us.

**1 John 2:1-2** My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Jesus switches and gives us His righteousness for our sins. This is how God works--through Jesus. And it just so happens, that nothing just so happens. Fate always turns according to plan. Jesus trusted the timing of God’s greatest blunder. He is God’s most glorious wonder. And for us He suffered God’s most fearsome and egregious terror and thunder, so that we would never suffer the wrath of a Judge, but only the loving discipline of a Father. And we rest in the relationship purchased for us by Jesus. It just so happens, nothing just so happens. Fate always turns according to plan.

He was 17 years old, the apple of his father’s eye. He was the bane of his brothers’ existence. In his smug designer robe, he smeared his brothers with a bad report. He scorned them with insufferable dreams. When the opportunity arrived, they abandoned him in a shaft and then sold him as a slave. He made the best of the situation, serving his master with all his might. But day after day, Potiphar’s wife aggressively stalked him with seduction. And one day, by surprise, she caught him. And she caught his garment. And to escape, he had to leave it in her hands. She turned it against him and accused him of immorality, and he was locked away in prison. And in that dungeon, he interprets two more dreams--one for ill and one for good. He makes the man promise to remember his plight, but again he is forgotten.

Joseph’s life was the pits. How could any good come from this? It just so happens that at the perfect time, he was summoned by Pharaoh, raised to shelter a nation, and his own family from famine. And through God’s design, his brothers are rescued and God’s promise will be preserved. Later, their father passes away. And his brothers are desperate! They’re terrified that he’s going to avenge their wrong-doings. But by God’s grace, he’s been empowered to forgive. On this crucial topic, God gives an answer in the very first book of His Word.

**Genesis 50:20** As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

The story is not yet over. A hint of how God works has been given, but the chapter ends with Joseph in a coffin and all of us hoping in the promise of God. It’s a reversal that is only completed in the future. It’s the same here in the book of Esther. Mordecai and Esther have been saved, but there’s still a major dilemma. God’s promise is still on the line. All the rest of the Jews on the 13th day of the 12th month of Adar, an impending defeat that appears irreversible. And the the question we wonder is: Who is going to win? The answer we will discuss in two weeks in chapters 8-10. We celebrate our victory in Part 5, *The Great Reversal*.