



THE HOPE OF DELIVERANCE

FOCUS PASSAGE: ESTHER 7-8:14

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: Can you think of a moment in your life where a sudden turn of events changed a situation from impossible to possible?



HEAR THE WORD

Pause for a moment of prayer before reading today's focus passage.

CONTEXT

Slavery in Esther's time was an everyday occurrence and way of life. In fact, one of the most common problems that led to enslavement even among the Jewish population was debt.

Since King Xerxes was a man known for his tyrannical, explosive, and often heartless methods of dealing with problems in his kingdom, Esther's strategy had to do more than ask the king to free her people from their persecutor. She had to use all the resources at her disposal - her position, relationship to the king and to Haman, her beauty and cunning - to make a favorable petition that would unveil Haman's plan and spur the king into action.

Upon successfully exposing Haman, a number of reversals take place in the narrative: (1) Haman's famed estate is given over to Esther as a gift (Es. 8:2), (2) Esther speaks plainly of her nationality and familial relations to the Jews (Es. 8:6), and (3) Mordecai is brought in to the king's court and given Haman's former honour and position (Es. 8:2,15).

SEEK THE WORD

Spend the next 5-10 minutes seeking to understand more about the passage. What are the key events, characters or themes that stand out? Which parts of the passage draw your attention? Express these in questions, observations, and reflective response.

ENGAGE THE WORD

Continue to reflect and discuss today's focus passage using the following questions. Feel free to address any questions or observations brought up in the previous section.

- "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves." (Matthew 10:16) How do you observe Esther playing her role as a "sheep among wolves"? What could we learn from the way she goes about it?
- Taking this story into consideration as one of many battles fought and won in the Bible, what do you observe about the way God fights battles against the evil forces of the world?
- Do you see any parallels between the story of Esther and the overall story of the Bible? Consider the problem, the conflict, and ultimate resolution of these stories.

LIVE THE WORD

Whenever we encounter the Word of God on our own time or with other believers, we are called to understand its message with not only our heads, but with our hearts.

- Esther stands as an important example for those Christian men and women who live with a minority status within a dominant culture. What has this narrative taught you about how we as Christians are called to live in a society that does not necessarily agree with or accept our beliefs or worldview?
- Do you find yourself seeking God's deliverance today? Alternatively, in what area(s) in your life do you need to learn to lean into God's promise that He will gain ultimate victory when trouble arises? Take these reflections to God in prayer.

BIG IDEA: God's work produces unexpected results, and sometimes even unexpected rewards for those who are faithful!

