

Subject: Evidence of God's Providence

Scripture: Esther 2:1-23

The book of Esther and the book of Ruth are the only Bible books named after women. In chapter 2, we are introduced to Esther. Her Hebrew name was Hadassah (2:7) which means "Myrtle." Her Persian name Esther means "star." Esther was an orphan who was adopted by her cousin Mordecai. She loved and obeyed him as her foster father.

The second chapter begins, "After these things," which refers to the things that happened in chapter 1. We see the hand of God working in the glove of history, and as chapter 2 unfolds we see further evidence of God's sovereignty and His providence. Sovereignty is God's control over all things. Providence is God's working in all the details and events to accomplish His will. God uses bad things, good things, big things, and little things to carry out His plan. J. Vernon McGee defines God's providence as "the means by which God directs all things, both animate and inanimate, seen and unseen, good and evil, toward a worthy purpose, which means His will must finally prevail."

God's name is not found anywhere in Esther, but we see God's hand everywhere. To understand and appreciate the story of Esther we should keep three Bible verses in mind:

Proverbs 21:1 *The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.*

Daniel 4:35 *And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?*

Romans 8:28 *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

WE SEE GOD'S PROVIDENCE IN THE BAD THINGS

We see God's hand at work in the king's depravity, the queen's defiance, the king's disgrace, and the king's decree to replace Vashti as queen. Some bad things had also happened to God's people and the families of Esther and Mordecai.

Esther and Mordecai were Jewish captives in a foreign land (vs. 6)

Many years earlier they had been taken as captives into Babylon and now they were captives in the Persia. At the same time, Daniel and his three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were captives in a strange land. Some of the Jews returned to their homeland about 60 years earlier, but most of them stayed in Persia. The book of Esther explains how God took care of His people and protected them while they lived in a foreign land. All of that didn't just happen. God had a plan and a purpose.

Esther was forced to participate in the king's harem (vs. 8)

Esther didn't volunteer to be the next queen, but she was forced to participate. Esther was a godly Jewish woman who found herself in a very unpleasant situation. Have you ever wondered why bad things happen to you? Remember that God is up to something and nothing just happens without His direction or permission. Everything in the story was done to please the king, but actually everything was done to please the King of kings. Some of these things were bad, unpleasant things. The chemicals in most medicines if taken by themselves would kill a person, but working together they make a sick person well.

WE SEE GOD'S PROVIDENCE IN THE GOOD THINGS

Esther was loved by Mordecai as her foster father (vs. 7)

He took his younger cousin as an orphan and raised her in a loving, stable home. Many of us can say we were cared for in our childhood and raised in a Christian home.

Esther was very beautiful and found favor with her keeper (vs. 7-9)

God blessed her with physical beauty. All of our physical features come from God. God also caused Hegai to show her kindness and take special care of her.

Esther was able to conceal her Jewish identity (vs. 10)

God would use this at the right time. Mordecai and Esther hid their Jewish identity to save their own lives, but God used this to save the lives of all the Jews.

Esther was chosen to be the next queen (vs. 16-17)

God wanted her to be in that position, even though she never wanted it. Now all of this took a long time. Esther and all the young ladies went through 12 months of purifying and beauty treatments. Can you imagine how they must have smelled? Have you ever walked through the perfume section of a department store? I came across the results of a survey which found that 15% of women questioned tinted their hair, 22% wore false eyelashes, 38% occasionally wore wigs or hairpieces, 80% wore rouge or facial makeup, and yet 100% voted in favor of a resolution that outlawed any kind of false packaging." Esther didn't need makeup. She had natural beauty and charm, but she had no ambition to be the next queen. She knew that God's hand was in it, and she accepted her position as queen as a part of God's plan.

WE SEE GOD'S PROVIDENCE IN THE LITTLE THINGS

In verses 21-23 we see some things that happened to Mordecai. Don't think that God is working only in the big things. He is working in the small and unexpected ways.

Mordecai was in the right place at the right time (v. 19)

He was sitting in the king's gate, so he had some responsible position in the kingdom. The gate was like the courthouse, the place of official business. God brought him there that day.

Mordecai overheard a plot to assassinate the king (vs. 21-22)

When he heard it he told Esther who then informed the king and gave credit to Mordecai.

Mordecai's good deed was recorded, but not rewarded (vs. 23)

It was written into the official record that Mordecai saved the king's life, but there was no fanfare or public recognition. But God would take care of that at the right time. Do what you're supposed to do and God will reward you in due time. ***Galatians 6:9*** *And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

Two important things happen in this chapter. Esther becomes the new queen and Mordecai saves the king's life. The stage is now set for what is going to happen later. We need to see the time element in Esther. The events in this book took place over a 10-year period from 483-473 B.C. In 1:2, the third year of the king's reign, Vashti was removed as queen. In 2:16, the seventh year of the king's reign, Esther is selected as the new queen. In 3:7, the twelfth year of the king's reign, God spares the Jews and defeats their enemy Haman.

In God's providence bad things turn out to be good things, little things turn out to be big things, overlooked things turn out to be important things, and all things turn out to be His things. God is providentially working all things together for the good of His people and He is working them out on His own timetable.

Do you see the evidence of God's providence in your life? God brought you here today for a reason. You are a part of this church for a reason. Nothing happens by accident or chance.