

Fall Guy

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[0 : 00] So we want to be in Esther chapter 6, and you're looking for verse number 10. Esther chapter 6, verse number 10, and we're going to read down through chapter 7 and verse number 2.

Then the king said to Haman, Hurry, take the robes and the horse, as you have said, 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, 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.

[1 : 05] While they were yet talking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and hurried to bring Haman to the feast that Esther had prepared. So the king and Haman went in to feast with Queen Esther.

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.

As the king's eunuchs hurry Haman to Esther's second banquet, we don't know what Haman is thinking. But he must certainly be thinking that his day couldn't possibly get any worse.

He has just finished parading his arch enemy Mordecai through the streets of Susa, proclaiming his praises as he goes.

This is what will happen to the one whom the king delights to honor. What a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day for Haman. But in Haman's mind, the worst must be over.

[2 : 13] This day couldn't possibly get any worse. And now he is invited to a second exclusive banquet with the king and queen. The day was humiliating, but the evening brings honor.

Esther, on the other hand, knows that her greatest challenge for today lies just ahead.

Have you ever needed to say something hard to another person? Maybe you need to confront someone about their sin.

Maybe you need to confess a sin to someone else. Maybe you need to tell someone a bad medical diagnosis or share a piece of news that you wonder if it might hurt them.

You remember how anxious you felt? How uncomfortable that pit in your stomach? Why do you feel that? Why do we feel that discomfort with having to tell someone this thing that you know needs to come out?

[3 : 28] I suspect it's because we don't know how that other person is going to respond. We don't know how they're going to respond. Isn't it true that when you need to say that hard thing, the time just never seems right?

Or maybe someone walks in and sort of interrupts the moment, you know? And so you put it off. Maybe you're paralyzed by the debate in your head. Should I?

Shouldn't I? Is it worth it? Am I going to hurt the person? Will the good that's to come be greater than the pain that I'm going to cause them? But the longer you wait, the heavier the weight on your heart and mind.

Esther has kept a secret from King Ahasuerus for five years. But today is the day when she will tell the king her secret and make her request.

History gives Esther good reason to be anxious. Herodotus, the Greek historian, writes about a man named Plinius.

[4 : 39] He is Plinius the Lydian. I just like the way that sounds. So I'm mentioning that. His name is Plinius the Lydian. Plinius donated, heavily financed the kings.

King Ahasuerus' war with Greece. And King Ahasuerus was so impressed by his loyalty that he gave him his money back. And I suspect that Plinius the Lydian, feeling somehow buoyed by the king's generosity to give back this large sum of money, decides to ask him for just one request. This is his request. My oldest son, let him be relieved of his military duties.

Let him come back from war. And let him come and be with me and serve me and take care of me in my old age. This seems like a very reasonable request for a king like Ahasuerus to receive and to grant, especially when you consider that Plinius the Lydian had five sons serving in the army. He's just asking for one to come home. Do you know what King Ahasuerus did? What a grim and gruesome warning for those like Esther, who dare to make requests of King Ahasuerus.

[6 : 26] But here we are. Dinner is over. The trio is enjoying wine. The king asks Esther for her requests. And like the first two times, he assures her that he intends to be generous.

But I suspect that Esther still feels the pit in her stomach, knowing that the king's peace will most certainly be upset by the peace of information that she is about.

To reveal. Chapter 7, verse 1. So the king and Haman went in to feast with Queen Esther.

And on the second day, as they were drinking wine after the feast, the king again said to Esther, What is your request, King Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is, sorry, 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. 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.

[7 : 49] 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. Now, if you were to flip back and compare when Queen Esther appeared uninvited in chapter 5, Esther addresses the king in the third person. She says this, If it please the king, and if I have found favor in the sight of the king. But here in verse 2, Esther speaks to the king in the first person.

Do you see that in your Bible? If I have found favor in your sight. If I have found favor in your sight. She's choosing words that emphasize her relationship to the king.

And when the king asks, What is your wish, and what is your request? We know that he is expecting her to give one answer. But Esther grabs hold of the king's words, and she says, My wish is for my life, and my request is for the life of my people.

[9 : 17] This is like if your mom says, What do you want for dinner? What would you like to eat? And you say, I would like pizza for dinner, and I would like to eat Dairy Queen blizzards afterwards.

You know she was only offering you one thing. But you're seizing the moment, but you're seizing the moment, right? Grabbing hold of her words and saying, You offered a wish and a request. And that seems to be what Esther does here. My wish is for my life, and my request is for the life of my people.

Esther, again, uses the passive voice in verse number four. Look in your Bible. We have been sold. We talked about this a few weeks ago. The elephant in the room is who sold them, right? We have been sold. We need her to reveal who sold them.

[10 : 21] But by using the passive voice, Esther delays the who. She stretches out the tension, and she works around the king's defenses. She is going to raise his level, stir his anger before he knows what the target is.

This reminds me of how the prophet Nathan addresses King David in 2 Samuel chapter 12, stirring up the king's desire for justice for this poor man who has had his ewe lamb taken.

In the middle of verse four, Esther says, If we had been sold merely as slaves. And the second half of this verse is hard to interpret, I think.

But the NIV is helpful. Let me just read it. If we had been sold merely as slaves, no such distress would justify disturbing the king.

That seems to be the idea that Esther is getting at here. If this was just about our slavery, I wouldn't have even brought this up. Which is ironic, since this is essentially what happened to Esther, isn't it?

[11:40] She was taken, brought into the harem as a slave to the king. But Esther says, If we were just sold into slavery, then so be it.

It wouldn't have been worth bringing it up and disturbing the king. But then she goes ahead and adds the exact words of Haman's decree.

Look in your Bible. We have been sold to be destroyed, to be killed, and annihilated. The exact words of the decree from Esther chapter 3 and verse number 13.

Haman is so conceited that even if he is sipping wine at this point, he's got to notice these words because he's thinking, those are good words.

Those sound like the kind of words that I might write. And sure enough, they are the kind of words, the exact words, that Haman would write.

[12:41] The king's response to all of this begins with six one-syllable words in the Hebrew. And our translations pick up on this.

One author says that his words in the Hebrew sound like machine gun fire. And I think you can pick up on that a little bit. Listen to verse number 5. Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther, here come the words, Who is he?

And where is he who has dared to do this? The tension in the banquet hall is sky high.

The king has no idea who is behind this threat to the life of his queen. No idea who is behind the plot.

But he is definitely not expecting Esther's response. Notice how she brilliantly matches the king's words a second time.

[13:41] Two questions from the king. Do you see them? Who is he? And where is he? She's going to match his words for the second time with two answers.

Verse number 6. Esther said, A foe. And enemy this wicked Haman.

Then Haman was terrified before the king and queen. We remember back from chapter 3 and verse 10.

Haman is called the enemy of the Jews. But notice this. I find this so intriguing. Esther has not revealed that she's a Jew.

Haman is not merely the enemy of the Jews. He has now proven himself to be the enemy of the king. This is no longer a political situation for King Ahasuerus to deal with.

[14:51] This is personal. I think it's fascinating how Esther continues just to draw out this tension by mentioning Haman's name very last.

It's the last thing she says. Haman is terrified and for very good reason. Look in your Bible and notice this at the end of verse 6.

He is terrified before notice this. The king and the queen. The king and the queen together are unified now against Haman.

Verse 7. And the king arose in his wrath from the wine drinking and went into the palace garden. How can the king save face? This is really awkward, isn't it? How can he save face? Can he really punish Haman for a decree that he personally authorized, personally approved, giving Haman his signet ring?

[16:17] this would be like if you are throwing the ball in the house with your dad. And as you are throwing the ball, the ball hits a picture frame and the picture frame comes tumbling down, crashes to the ground and breaks and your dad is ready to punish you.

That would be weird, right? Because we were throwing the ball together. I think there may be a better way to understand the king's wrath.

Imagine that you show up to Tim and Emily's house for one of their FCA gatherings where they gather with college students and as you are there to kind of help and participate in the event, Tim says, we are having a mystery meet and greet tonight.

And you're like, this sounds like a lot of fun. Like, we're going to put on bandanas and then play some guessing games and ask some questions and try to guess and get to know each other. A mystery meet and greet.

This is going to be so fun. And then Tim goes out to his garage and comes in carrying a bunch of white packages from the freezer and he begins unwrapping these packages and you notice that

one of these packages is labeled from September 2005.

[17 : 48] And he says, no, not that kind of mystery meet and greet. This kind of mystery meet and greet. Look in your Bible.

Chapter 3, verse number 9. Haman is speaking to the king. If it please the king, let it be decreed that they be destroyed and I will pay 10,000 talents of silver into the hands of those who have charge of the king's business that they may put it into the king's treasuries.

Now, did you notice the word destroyed there? I think I underlined and made it bold on the screen. Destroyed. This word in the Hebrew is a homophone for the word enslaved.

Enslaved. And because Haman uses this word and connects it to this large sum of money, it's very possible that King Ahasuerus here in chapter 3 hears these words, hears the word slavery, enslaved.

We're going to enslave this group of people for this amount of money. And he leaves feeling like they've done a good thing. We have sold off people and we are getting money for it.

[19 : 19] It's a mystery meet and greet. But Haman did not use that word. He intends to destroy them. But the Hebrew lets us interpret it either way.

slavery. And when the king hears it connected with the money, he may think that it's just about slavery. And now at Esther's second banquet when the king realizes what Haman has done, that you have pulled the switcheroo on me, you have deceived me, I thought we were talking about slavery, Haman, not extermination.

Now, the king is not only mad about the threat on his queen's life, I think the king is also mad because he realizes his prime minister has deceived him by his choice of words.

Persian protocol demands that Haman not remain alone with Esther, but Haman also knows that this king never makes decisions on his own, and so he stays with the queen to beg her to spare his life.

End of verse number seven. The king arose in his wrath from the wine drinking, 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, 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?

[21 : 10] As the word left the mouth of the king, they covered Haman's face. 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, 50 cubits high.

The king said, first time he makes a decision on his own, the king said, hang him on that. So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai, then the wrath of the king abated.

The king's question in verse number eight is almost certainly rhetorical. It is unlikely that the king thought Haman was actually trying to assault the king, the queen.

But the king sees Haman's fall. as an opportunity to seize the moment. And this word fall has been following our man Haman around for a little while.

From the very first time we met him, in fact. Chapter three and verse number seven, we're introduced to Haman and Haman is rolling the dice. He is letting the dice fall.

[22 : 37] And depending on how the dice fall, he chooses the date, 11 months in the future when he is going to execute the Jews. This word fall comes up a second time when he has told the king, this is what you should do for the one who you desire, you delight to honor.

And the king says back to Haman, go and do those things to Mordecai. And the king adds this, don't let one thing fall.

Don't let one thing fall. Don't miss one thing of everything that you have said. Do all of it, Haman. And then, after parading Mordecai around in chapter 6 and verse 13, Haman comes home and his wife and wise men use this word two times.

Alice read them for us. It's in chapter 6 and verse 13. Haman told his wife, Zeresh, and all his friends everything that had happened to him. And 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.

Haman plots to kill a Jew for not falling down before him and is executed on a charge of falling down before a Jew.

[24 : 12] Four times this word fall is connected to Haman. Haman's story arc is a warning about pride's inevitable collapse. Proverbs 16 warns, pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Haman is the fall guy. Think back through this story. Think back through this story. The only times Haman is happy is when his ego is being stroked.

Haman leaves the first banquet and he's happy. Why? Because he had one banquet and he gets to go to a second banquet with the king and queen. But immediately after that he sees Mordecai and Mordecai refuses to bow.

What does Haman do? He drags his badly wounded ego home and builds himself back up by boasting to his wife and friends about what a big deal he is.

And when he believes the king intends to honor him Haman can't say the words quickly enough. He just blurts out the robe and the horse and the noble official parading throughout the city.

[25 : 31] Haman can't say the words fast enough but when it's Haman who is the noble official doing the shouting instead of the one being shouted about Haman can't cover his face in shame quickly enough.

Haman's primary motivator is not ethnic hatred although he certainly has that. His primary motivator is not wealth although he is very wealthy Haman is driven by a need to be seen and recognized and honored as the one in authority.

Haman is not content being a big deal he needs everyone to know that he's a big deal. When Mordecai refuses to bow none of Haman's wealth none of his honor none of his political achievements none of his personal accomplishments can compensate for the public lack of disrespect.

Haman has an unquenchable thirst for authority and an unscratchable itch for affirmation.

Like Haman some people will do anything to get power and respect and once they have power and respect you should expect them to fight like mad to keep it.

[27 : 14] They have no hesitation about manipulating circumstances to further their agenda if you get in their way or if you are perceived as a threat people like Haman will do whatever it takes to get rid of you.

Those who act like Haman swim in the murky waters of self-deception and as a result they are often unable to see beyond their own self-interests.

Their narcissism will drive them to stunning levels of insensitivity and unholy lack of empathy. They will run over you if it helps them maintain their grip on power or if it elevates their standing in the community.

Perhaps you can recall someone like Haman from history. History is full of them. Perhaps you know someone like this and perhaps we all can be tempted from time to time not just with manic behaviors but with Hamanic behaviors.

And this is why we need Jesus. Jesus. As Jesus hangs on the cross it seems like the devil has orchestrated a perfect plot.

[28 : 37] Doesn't it? He has executed God's own son. And after the sun goes dark in the middle of the day for three hours and Jesus dies it certainly looks like evil has won.

But like Haman the devil fell into his own trap. The cross was not Satan's triumph. It was his undoing. Jesus' death is the devil's downfall.

Jesus takes our sin, absorbs the abuse of evil, endures God's wrath and enters into our death. But in doing so, in doing so, Jesus consumes the penalty for sin.

He triumphs over evil, he defeats death, and he destroys the one holding the power of death. Brian Gregory says this, sin was skewered by its own sinfulness.

Evil was defeated by its own design. And John Owen famously wrote, death was put to death in the death of Christ.

[30 : 04] Jesus' death and resurrection announced loud and clear, time is running out for those who act like Haman. One day you will be called to an account and your lies and your manipulation and your domination and your abuse will end and your reward will be perfectly measured poetic justice.

Haman did not wake up that day expecting that it would be the day that he died. I suppose no one does. have done so the story of Haman is a timely warning.

Are you prepared to stand before God? If you say to him, if I have found favor in your sight because of all of the good that I have done, then you should expect him to say, I don't know you and you should expect to be banished from his presence for all eternity to face the judgment that your sin deserves.

But if you could say instead, since my Lord Jesus Christ has found favor in your sight, then you can stand before God without any fear at all.

And you will be welcomed with great rejoicing into his presence. Take Haman's story as a warning. Repent of your pride.

[31 : 55] Repent of needing to be seen as significant. Give up trying to earn favor in God's sight by your own good works. Come to Jesus. Come to the one who humbled himself to the point of death, even death on a cross.

He offers you right now his grace, his forgiveness, his mercy that we've had the privilege of singing about. He offers you eternal life.

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. In this world cursed by sin, there will always be Haman's.

Mass murderers, tyrannical despots, power-grabbing presidents, ruthless dictators, self-deceived narcissists. And it will seem, it will seem for a season like they are getting away with it all.

But Psalm number 7 speaks to this. Psalm 7 in verse 14, Behold, the wicked man conceives evil and is pregnant with mischief.

[33 : 15] I love that metaphor. And gives birth to lies. He makes a pit, digging it out, and falls into the hole that he has made.

his mischief returns upon his own head, and on his own skull, his violence descends. Verse 11, God is a righteous judge.

Despite appearances, despite it seeming like power-grabbing people are getting away with it, like they are having their sin and cake to eat too, every Haman who seems so powerful, so untouchable, so happy, so successful, so secure in their significance, will be hung on their own gallows one day.

We know this because God is a righteous judge. Perpetrators of abuse and injustice, though they seem to get away with it for a time, perhaps they dodge responsibility, or they avoid consequences, or they blame others for their bad behavior, but Haman, the fall guy, and the defeat of Satan at the cross of our Savior Jesus should stir our faith.

Why? Because God is a righteous judge. So let's be patient as we wait for justice. Lest we become unjust ourselves, lest we take matters into our own hands, rather than trusting ourselves to the one who judges justly.

[35 : 12] Let's move with empathy towards those who are enduring justice, those who are suffering under cruel oppression, those who are withering under domineering leadership, like Esther, but more importantly, like Jesus.

Let's take up their cry for justice. Let's be the means through which God brings his kingdom into this fallen kingdom.

And let's be heralds of the good news of the gospel, because the death and the resurrection of Jesus assures us that the sands of time really are running out on sickness and shame and sin and death and evil and abuse and injustice.

Our God holds this world. Jesus will balance the scales of justice. So be patient, brothers and sisters.

Justice will come. Evil will reap what it sows. And when the king returns, he will set all things right.

[36 : 31] Let's pray. father, we are grateful for your word. Thank you for this story.

And despite the heaviness of this reality of the loss of life of Haman, thank you for what it teaches us. Thank you for how it warns us.

Thank you for how it causes our faith to be stirred as we remember that you are the righteous judge. Would you please help us as we take a few moments to consider the things that we have heard and in the quietness of our hearts, Holy Spirit, would you please do work?

Cause us to feel conviction where we need to be convicted of sin. Cause us to have stirred up faith where we have been inclined to doubt.

Cause us to have fresh resolve in caring for others and forgive us where we have left those things undone. Father, we are grateful that you are a righteous judge.

[37 : 50] And we are grateful for your word in 1 John chapter 1 that if we confess our sin, you are faithful and just to forgive our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Because of the death of Jesus, on our behalf, it would be unjust for you not to forgive. Your word declares this truth and so we declaim it as true.

Thank you for the blood of Jesus. Thank you that Jesus paid it all. God, we are eagerly looking forward to the day when the king returns in a robe of white.

And we will see the sun blazing in all of his glory. Would you help us now to be prepared for that day and to work with whatever you give us to see that kingdom coming here in this world?

We ask this for your glory and our good in Jesus' name. Amen.