



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Surrender for Victory: The Book of Esther & Vince Lombardi

ED HAMRICK

ESTHER

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"WINNING ISN'T EVERYTHING, IT'S THE ONLY THING."

VINCE LOMBARDI

Today we live in a society obsessed with winning. In sports we compare wins and losses, in business we look at the bottom line and here at the Capitol we count the yeas and nays. We idolize and strive to emulate star athletes, Oscar winning actors, millionaire business tycoons and even successful politicians. Our competitive culture teaches us to strive always for victory never giving up in the process. Against that backdrop the word surrender is almost always viewed in a negative context. We consider surrender an act of weakness that implies losing, admitting defeat or submitting to a stronger opponent. It would be unthinkable to associate surrender with victory. Yet throughout the Old Testament God uses surrendered people to achieve victory. One such person was Esther, a beautiful young Jewish woman who lived with her older cousin Mordecai in Persia about 100 years after the Babylonian captivity. Her story takes place primarily in King Ahasuerus's palace in Susa, one of the four capital cities of the Persian Empire.

"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he might exalt you at the proper time." 1 Peter 5:6

ESTHER'S STORY

The story begins with Queen Vashti refusing to appear at the King's banquet resulting in her being deposed as Queen. Esther 1:19. To find a new queen, a decree was issued to assemble eligible young women before the King that he might choose a replacement. Esther was among those taken to the King's palace but she did not make known her Jewish heritage. Esther 2:8-10. Esther found favor with the King and was crowned queen. Esther 2:17. During this time, Mordecai uncovered a plot to assassinate the King and shared it with Esther who told the King, saving his life. Esther 2: 22-23. The King's highest ranking official was Haman who hated the Jews and had a special dislike for Mordecai who refused to pay homage to him. Without revealing their identity, Haman convinces the King to allow him to kill every Jew in Persia on a specific day. Esther 3:8-11. Esther learns of the impending destruction of her people and makes a historic decision. Esther 4:11, 13-14.

ESTHER SURRENDERS

Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai. "Go assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa and fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens will also fast in the same way and thus I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law; *and if I perish, I perish.*" Esther 4:17

Esther's decision to risk her life to save her fellow Jews was a difficult one. For one, she had not been summoned to come to the King for a month. She most likely considered the possibility that another woman had found favor with the King and her appearing before him unrequested could provide a perfectly legal means for her removal. She may also have contemplated remaining silent, for her heritage had not been revealed and those who might reveal it would soon be dead. In the end she surrendered, placing her life in God's hands.

GOD'S PROVIDENCE AT WORK

With more twists and turns than a Shakespearian play the rest of Esther's story dramatically illustrates how things beyond our knowledge and control, but very much a part of God's greater plan, seamlessly fall into place assisting us in ways we never could have imagined.

Esther appears before the King and is granted favor. She invites the King and Haman to two banquets, deferring her real request to the second banquet. Esther 5: 2, 4, 8. The night before the second banquet the King suffers a bout of insomnia and calls for some reading material. Esther 6:1. Despite the passage of five years, the record of Mordecai's revelation of the plot to kill the King is read and it is learned he was never honored for his good deed. Haman who had come to the palace to speak to the King about hanging Mordecai is instead asked how he should be honored. Esther 6:4,6. Thinking the King intends to honor him Haman suggests recognition worthy of royalty. Imagine the humiliation and shame Haman feels when he learns it is Mordecai who is to be honored and he must honor him. Esther 6:11. Haman's day goes from bad to worse at the banquet when Esther reveals her request and points the finger at him. Esther 7: 3, 6. Haman gets what he deserves and is hanged on the gallows. Esther 7:10. Mordecai replaces Haman and is given the means to protect God's chosen people. Esther 8:8.

BIBLE STUDIES

BUDGET WEEK BIBLE STUDY: TUESDAY MARCH 11, 12:00 NOON, TREASURER'S CONFERENCE ROOM (EB 54 BASEMENT, EAST WING)

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WHAT A DIFFERENCE A DAY MAKES

It is important to summarize what happened after Esther appeared before the King, putting her life at risk for her people and placing her fate in the hands of God. Within approximately 24 hours:

- Esther's life and the lives of her people are saved
- Haman is humbled and hanged on the gallows he built for Mordecai
- Mordecai replaces Haman and establishes a plan for allowing the Jews to destroy over 75,000 of their enemies including Haman's 10 sons.

The story of Esther clearly demonstrates that the sovereign hand of God is at work in the lives of His people but could it also indicate that surrender is the catalyst that unleashes God's providence in our favor that might otherwise never occurred.

VINCE LOMBARDI ON SURRENDER

While the highly successful Green Bay Packers coach is most remembered for his quote on winning cited earlier, it is only fair that we also acknowledge his words regarding faith and religion that have application to this study.

"When we place our dependence in God, we are unencumbered, we have no worry. In fact, we may even be reckless, insofar as our part in the production is concerned. This confidence this sureness of action, is both contagious and an aid to the perfect action. The rest is in the hands of God- and this is the same God, who has won all his battles up to now." Vince Lombardi

TERMS OF SURRENDER

Here at the Capitol there are times when opposing sides compromise on an issue, giving in or surrendering only a part of their position to pass legislation. While that is a perfectly legitimate and often times necessary part of the political process, it is not an acceptable practice when it comes to our relationship with God. God demands complete and total surrender.

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. Romans 12:1

Surrender is a lifelong process, practiced daily. Noah toiled for 120 years to build the ark. He and his family were often ridiculed for their work on God's behalf. Noah lived hundreds of miles from the nearest ocean and rain as we know it today didn't even exist, yet he persevered.

I affirm, brethren, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. I Corinthians 15:31

The greatest obstacle most of us face trying to live a surrendered life is our own stubborn pride and self-serving nature. We are fearful of losing control and experiencing hardship or failure. Yet to receive God's full measure of blessing and power in our own lives we must relinquish control of our plans for God's plan.

In the Old Testament story of the battle of Jericho, Joshua and his army surrendered their own military strategies to an odd plan proposed by the Lord that involved marching around the walls of the city blowing horns and shouting. Their surrender led to a stunning victory.

Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God. II Corinthians 3:5

THE ULTIMATE VICTORY THROUGH SURRENDER

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being formed in appearance as a man, He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2: 5-11.

The suffering and death of Jesus Christ as an atonement for our sin provides the greatest example of surrendering for victory.

O death, where is your victory? O death where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. I Corinthians 15:55-57

As part of God's sovereign plan Jesus died that we might have victory over sin and death.

TO THINK ABOUT

- **WHAT CAN WE EXPECT TO RECEIVE WHEN WE SURRENDER OUR LIVES TO GOD?**
- **CAN YOU RECALL A TIME IN YOUR LIFE WHEN GOD'S PROVIDENCE WORKED IN YOUR FAVOR?**