

## Grace Guide

### Esther 8 & 9

The farther we go into this book, the more similarities I see between Mordecai and Haman. Pride got Mordecai into a heap of trouble earlier in this book. His refusal to bow to Haman got Haman so fired up that he decided he was going to annihilate, destroy, kill, etc. all the Jews in the Persian provinces. 3:2 shows us that account. Later on, pride almost got Mordecai hanged on the gallows. 5:9, 14. I said last week that Mordecai was a bit of a hypocrite due to his refusal to bestow honor where it was due but then he had no problem being honored himself.

At this very moment (8 and 9) in the account, Mordecai is being celebrated and hailed as a hero. But for what? For God providentially saving him *from himself*? Because that is exactly what's happened. Mordecai was filled with pride and his pride almost led to his destruction (not to mention the destruction of his people), twice, and both times, God preserved him.

God has a will. God has a purpose. God has a plan. Nothing is going to keep that from being accomplished. I hope you have seen that clearly as we've worked through the pages of this book. Not pride, not vanity, not sin, not self-centeredness...nothing is going to thwart that plan. In Daniel chapter 4, King Nebuchadnezzar gets a healthy dose of God's judgement (because of tremendous pride, I might add) and at the end of that period he blesses the Lord, and this is what he said:

**For His dominion is an everlasting dominion,  
And His kingdom endures from generation to generation.  
<sup>35</sup> "All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,  
But He does according to His will in the host of heaven  
And among the inhabitants of earth;  
And no one can ward off His hand  
Or say to Him, 'What have You done?'**

Interesting to note, isn't it? Another king of another current (at the time) world power is getting to experience what it's like to enjoy (or not enjoy) being a part of God's ultimate plan. Proverbs 21:1. Where he had once strolled through his palace and thought so highly of himself, he ultimately says that those that inhabit the land, himself included, are nothing. If you continue reading that chapter, it certainly sounds like "Old Neb" ends up trusting in the Lord; though not before the Lord brings him low to show him the extent of his prideful heart.

**What other people in the scriptures can you think of that were brought low because of pride? What was God's method of dealing with them and their sin?**

I said that Haman and Mordecai had similarities and sometimes these things are used interchangeably, but whereas Mordecai's problem was **pride**, Haman's was **vanity**. These are unique sins because of how they present themselves. There are many outward sins that people can be quick to jump on and cast judgement, but some don't necessarily present themselves until someone is put in a certain situation, as we see demonstrated by Mordecai and Haman. If you were to take Haman out of the story, who knows what would have eventually caused Mordecai to show how proud he was. Same with Haman. Take Mordecai away and he could have lived a somewhat normal life, until someone else finally defied him and burst his bubble.

Pride places **your** opinion, especially your opinion concerning yourself above the opinions of anyone

else. Mordecai didn't care a bit in the world what "Mr. second in command", Haman thought of him. As far as he was concerned, he was the only one at the king's gate that mattered. And it drove Haman nuts, because vanity places the upmost importance on what **others** think of you. A vain person can't be truly happy until everyone loves, or at least seems to love them. And the quest for that feeling will spare no expense. No one is safe from being thrown under the bus to appease that need to feel accepted and loved. The Apostle John refers to this as "the boastful pride of life" and it has nothing to do with God but is identified as "from the world". **What are some of the ways pride can be a destructive force in our lives or in our church?**

When you read back in chapter 5 where Haman recounts all the wonderful things that he has, we see that he just cannot be happy as long as Mordecai stands at the king's gate in defiance. Well, I'll tell you folks, there's no fulfillment in either one of these things, pride or vanity and it's unfortunate for both of these characters. As we've been reading and will continue to read, there is a reason to be glad and to rejoice, given the situation the Jews found themselves in...but still, credit is not given where it's due.

It's for this reason that as we finish this book next week, I don't have the same joyous feeling that usually accompanies the final week(s) of a book study. I've thought a lot about what leaves the unsettled feeling in my spirit and I think ultimately it comes down to the fact that God STILL isn't acknowledged.

Not only that, but whereas other prominent feasts for the Jewish people were instituted by God, this one we'll be learning about next week is instituted by Mordecai. Couple that with 9:3-4 ***"Even all the princes of the provinces, the satraps, the governors and those who were doing the king's business assisted the Jews, because the dread of Mordecai had fallen on them. <sup>4</sup> Indeed, Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces; for the man Mordecai became greater and greater."***

Sounds like a recipe for disaster, doesn't it? Here's a guy that is already a legend in his own mind and then he has the people of the land that later confirm all that he already thought of himself. Maybe what bothers me most is that in verses 3 and 4 that I underlined, the name of God, not Mordecai belonged. Maybe I'm wrong in my ideas regarding this, but I think it's interesting that we don't ever read or hear anything else about old Mordecai. When Ahasuerus is assassinated later on in his reign, Mordecai must not have made the cut when power transitioned to Artaxerxes.

**If you have thoughts or opinions on these things, I would love to hear them, and I think this is an opportunity for fruitful discussion among your groups so if you have some light on this, please be ready to share it.**