

I said back when we began our study that from time to time we would be stepping back and looking at "types" illustrated in this book. There are two men, Ray Stedman and Major Ian Thomas who have done a wonderful job tying the characters we read about in this book to spiritual types. For this week, to give us a different perspective, I'd like to share some thoughts with you from Stedman. We'll begin by jumping back temporarily to chapter 3.

Now in chapter 3 of this book we are introduced to the villain, a slimy character by the name of Haman the Agagite. As you trace this man's ancestry back through Scripture you discover that an Agagite is an Amalekite, and Amalek was that race of people, descendants of Esau, against whom God had said he would make war forever. (Exodus 17:16) King Saul had been ordered to completely eliminate this people, but in his folly, he chose to spare Agag the king of the Amalekites and thus perpetuated this faithless force in Israel. Throughout the whole of Scripture, this tribe of Amalekites represents the indwelling desire in our hearts that is continually opposed to all that God wants to do. This is what the New Testament calls "the flesh," and whenever the Spirit of God begins to move to bless us, this thing rises up to oppose the Spirit and do all it can in its subtle, clever, crafty way to hinder the work of God. Now that is Haman.

In chapter 3 we read that as soon as Haman comes to wield power in a place of prominence just below the king, he is immediately antagonistic toward Mordecai. These two are instantly in direct conflict because Haman was "the enemy of the Jews." Learning that Mordecai is a Jew, he vows to eliminate him from the kingdom, and all through this account we read over and over again that the thing characterizing Haman is that he hates the Jews. Now why does he hate the Jews? **Recall chapter 3:8.**

In other words, here is a people -- who obey a different life principle. Just as the spirit of man indwelt by the Holy Spirit is immediately subject to a different rule of living, a different way of thinking, a different demand, so these Jews are obeying a different principle. Because they are God's people, Haman is furious in his rage against them -- and he concocts a terrible strategy. This man was very clever, just as the flesh within us is very clever in its strategy to keep us under bondage. The story of this book is about the way God works to get the wrong man out of control and the right man in. The reason we have problems as Christians -- even after being born again -- is that the flesh subtly and cleverly opposes all that God attempts to do in our lives. These words in Galatians accurately describe the whole struggle:

¹⁷ For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. (Galatians 5:17)

Now Haman immediately goes to work to persuade the king that, for the king's own benefit, he should eliminate these people. Haman, then, becomes the power behind the throne. He controls the king. The king does what Haman wants him to do and issues an edict to eliminate the Jews from all the kingdom. Just so, in our lives the flesh continually strives to render inoperative the control of the Holy Spirit and to cause us to continually walk according to the old self-serving, self-loving, self-satisfying principles that prevail in the world around us. We read that when Haman and Mordecai come face-to-face this enmity begins. The Spirit is resisted and, at the close of chapter 3, Haman has prevailed upon the king to give him the royal ring -- the mark of authority and power -- and to issue the edict which would destroy the Jews throughout the kingdom.

After he does this, the king in his folly thinks that Haman is his friend and invites him in to have a drink and to pat him on the back. He congratulates himself on his cleverness with Haman. Often in our own lives we think that we too have displayed cleverness in standing up for our own rights and insisting that nobody walk roughshod over us. We feel that we have acted very cleverly and congratulate ourselves for exercising control over a situation. Yet all the time we are unaware that in our utter folly we have done the very thing that will

instead continue to wreak havoc in our lives and put us entirely at the mercy of this deadly enemy within, the flesh.

In chapter 4 we have the story of how God begins to move. Mordecai is grieved. **Haven't you had this experience of living with a grieved Spirit?** The first thing that the Spirit of God does when we begin to walk in the flesh is to create a sense of disquiet within, a sense of grief. It is deep within us. We hardly know how to put our finger on it. We know that something is not right, but we don't know what it is. Esther sees that Mordecai is very distressed and, not knowing what to do, she sends him a change of clothes, hoping that will take care of the problem. Many times, when we are distressed and grieved in spirit because of our attitudes and our activities, we often think that some superficial change will correct the matter. We think the problem concerns only what we are doing, and not what we are.

Then Mordecai sends a messenger named Hathach (by the way, that means the truth) to convince Esther that she is up against a serious problem. He unfolds to Esther the whole deadly plot of this cunning Haman: how he is out to destroy the Jews, including the queen herself, although Haman does not know that Esther is a Jew. When Esther hears this, she is disturbed and doesn't know what to do. Mordecai sends her further word, saying, "Now you must go to the king."

The problem is to get the king to understand that Haman is not his friend, just as the problem in our lives is to get us to really believe God when He tells us that the principles that characterize the flesh are not our friends. They are not on our side. When we get stubborn, belligerent, difficult, impatient -- when we demonstrate qualities that characterize the flesh -- we are not working for our own interests. We **think** we are. We think that these are the things that give us manliness and humanity and strength of character and so on. And here we have a deluded king who doesn't know that his supposed best friend is really his worst enemy.

What Mordecai has asked Esther to do is a dangerous thing; to appear before the king without being summoned was in itself a sentence of death. So, Esther sends word back to Mordecai, "You don't know what you are asking me to do. Don't you know that in asking me to go before the king like this you are literally sentencing me to death? The very moment that I step across that threshold, my life is forfeited. You are asking me to die." And she suggests that perhaps some other way can be worked out; and Mordecai replies bluntly, "Don't try to outwit Haman yourself. If you think you can outwit the strategy and cleverness of this man, you are wrong. He'll outwit you. He'll out maneuver you. He'll move in behind you. He'll trap you. You will end up whipped." This is what the seventh chapter in Romans so clearly teaches us. If we think that we can handle the flesh with our will-power alone, we are whipped. -- **We also saw this to be true in the book of Joshua.**

This is one of the most difficult things to grasp about the Christian life. It is the most elusive thing to understand -- that we must come to the end of ourselves, and that we must die to our own resources in order to handle the flesh. We cannot do this alone. We cannot do it by clenching our fists or gritting our teeth or signing New Year's resolutions, or by determining we are not going to act in a certain way any longer...Esther must be willing to die to her own resources in order to handle this man.

As Esther faces this truth, she says:

"Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law; and if I perish, I perish." (Esther 4:16)