

THE SERVANTS' DISSENSION: INTERNAL CONFLICT

Esther 3.2-4: The king's servants dissent and lead the kingdom toward destruction

Theme: If *you* (the “king”) do not control your servants, they will dissent, follow Haman, and bring destruction to your kingdom.

Chapter 3 begins with a bad decision: (v1) King Ahasuerus chooses to place Haman in charge.

- We saw that this is a sad, but all too common, picture of what many “Christians” do with the flesh.
- They made decisions to give the flesh what it wants, to trust in the flesh, and ultimately to follow it.

Today we see the great conflict begin.

- We've talked a lot about the conflict that Haman will stir up with the Jews.
- (v2-4) But in today's passage we are going to see that the conflict doesn't start with Haman personally. It starts with the servants (Haman is involved, but so is Ahasuerus... again!).
- (v5-6) When Haman does get personally involved, this conflict escalates almost immediately. But, that will be for our next message.
- Today we want to talk about these servants... that serve Haman... or do they serve the king...?

I. (v2) The Difference that Causes the Dissension

A. (v2a) The Servants' Reverence: Quick and Willing Submission to Haman

1. First, notice the description of the servants we have in this verse: “...*the king's servants*...”
 - a) We don't know how many there are, but we do know that all of them serve the king.
 - b) They exist to do what the king wants, to meet his needs, and to act according to his wishes.
2. Secondly, notice *where* they are: “...*in the king's gate*...” These servants are in Shushan the palace.
3. Third, notice how long it took them to submit to Haman: Immediately!
 - a) They bow and reverence Haman without a second thought. And why would they do that...?
 - b) Because the king told them to! “...*the king had so commanded*...”
4. These servants of the king that live in Shushan the palace are a picture and type of the *members of your body*.
 - a) We're talking about the members like your eyes, hands, ears, feet, etc. They, like Ahasuerus's servants, exist to do what you want them to do so they help meet your needs and act according to your wishes.
 - b) Shushan, the capitol city, is a picture of your body, and these servants live & work in Shushan!
5. And so once again we see a good picture of a carnal (immature) Christian.
 - a) With Ahasuerus we have the best of examples in our pictures and types: A new Christian!
 - b) He repented of his sin (Est 1: Vashti) and received God's provision of a new, regenerated spirit (Est 2: Esther).
 - (1) In Esther 3, therefore, we are seeing a picture of a Christian who is immature simply because he is a “new born.” He hasn't matured, yet.
 - (2) But, the same truths hold true for the “carnal” Christian because, in spite of his years, he still acts like an immature, baby Christian.
 - (3) Both the immature Christian and the “carnal” Christian don't know what to do with the members of their bodies (the “servants”), so they decide to have Haman take care of them.

6. (Rom 6.12-13) God's desire for our “servants” is completely the opposite.
 - a) We should never “so command” our members to to serve unrighteousness and sin (Haman).
 - b) And yet this is exactly what we see in picture and type in Esther 3 (with the servants) and it's exactly what we see in the lives of most people who say they are Christians.
 - (1) The king just gave Haman (the flesh) rule over his kingdom. Haman is now prime minister.
 - (2) The king just told all his servants in Shushan the capitol city to bow to and reverence Haman. And that is exactly what they did (and they did it *immediately*; no problem!).
 - (a) (Rom 6.19a) Ahasuerus just yielded his servants to uncleanness and iniquity.
 - (b) Now they (the servants; our members) will do whatever Haman (the flesh) wants.
 - (c) Convenient.
 - (d) We call this “carnality”: The flesh is running the show and the members follow!
7. But there is one guy that sits in the gate in Shushan the palace who refuses to submit...

B. (v2b) Mordecai's Refusal: Bold and Out-Spoken Refusal to Submit to Haman

1. Mordecai is our picture and type of the Holy Spirit, and he will never submit to Haman regardless of what the king says or of what the other servants do.
2. Now, here we should review our historical context.
 - a) Mordecai refused to bow to Haman and reverence him. Why? Was that a bad thing?
 - b) A lot of commentators run to the Second Commandment that prohibits the Jews from bowing down to idols.
 - c) But there are several examples of Jews in the Scripture who bow down to other men to show them respect, submission, and honor (i.e., reverence).
 - (1) (Gen 23.7) Abraham bowed himself to the children of Heth (Gentiles, pagans).
 - (2) (Gen 42.6) Joseph's brothers bowed down to him in Egypt.
 - (3) (Exod 18.7) Moses “did obeisance” to his father-in-law (he bowed and revered)
 - (4) (1Sam 24.8) David bowed before Saul.
 - d) The point: The Jews did not violate the Second Commandment by bowing before someone to show respect, submission, and. reverence. So, why did Mordecai not do it with Haman?
3. (v1) Remember who Haman is and where he comes from: He's an Agagite, from Amalek.
 - a) The people of Amalek (including Haman) is God's perpetual enemy.
 - (1) (Exod 17.16) God swore that He would have war with Amalek from generation to generation. Forever.
 - (2) (Deut 25.19) God will wipe out Amalek completely, even the remembrance of them.
 - b) Mordecai is a Jew. Mordecai knows this. So, Mordecai refuses to bow to and reverence Haman, the Agagite (a descendant of Agag, king of the Amalekites).
4. And once again we see the picture of the perpetual enmity between the Holy Spirit and the flesh.
 - a) (Gal 5.17) The Holy Spirit (like Mordecai before Haman) will never submit to the flesh.
 - b) (Rom 8.7) The flesh is the perpetual enemy of the Holy Spirit. They will oppose each other.

C. (v2) Review & Summary: The Difference that Causes the Dissension

1. Here we see the beginnings of the great conflict and battle for the control of the kingdom.
2. Who will rule? Haman or Mordecai? The king put Haman in charge and then told all the servants to bow to and reverence him. They did. But... Mordecai did not. And that sparks the conflict...

II. (v3-4) The Servants' Dissension Causes Conflict

A. (v3) The Servants Trouble Mordecai

1. The servants obviously see the one guy that refuses to bow down, and they start pestering him.
 - a) And, for now, it seems like Haman doesn't notice the issue.
 - b) But, the servants do and they start in on him immediately.
2. And this is exactly what the members of your body will do, if you let them.
 - a) (Rom 7.23) The law in your members will war against the new law in your mind; your members, submitted to sin, will war against the Spirit living in you.
 - b) And thus we see again that the internal conflict in Ahasuerus's kingdom is a picture and type of the internal conflict that goes on in our lives daily.
 - (1) Ahasuerus commands his servants to obey Haman, just like an immature or carnal Christian will submit his members to the flesh, to obey the flesh and its desires.
 - (2) But the Spirit lives in our bodies also, and He will never submit to the desires of the flesh.
 - (3) And so the conflict begins: Who will control the kingdom? Haman or Mordecai?

B. (v4) The Servants Tattle on Mordecai

1. When the servants didn't get the reaction from Mordecai they wanted, they run to Haman.
 - a) And it's obvious they do it with malice: They want to see if Mordecai will stand firm or not.
 - b) Mordecai, however, will not ever bow to Haman. And he will never give in to the servants' provocation. And neither will the Holy Spirit of God living in us...
2. The spiritual Christian refuses to give in to the flesh and to the desires of the members of his body.
 - a) The spiritual Christian is the Christian who is filled with (controlled/led by) the Holy Spirit of God. So, since the Spirit will *never* bow to Haman, neither will the spiritual Christian.
 - b) (1Cor 9.24-27) Think about Paul's example of a wrestler controlling his opponent (v27).
 - (1) If you do not control your body (by the power of the Holy Spirit), it will control you.
 - (2) Ahasuerus has turned over control of his kingdom to Haman and he will not get things straightened out until he removes Haman and gives control to Mordecai.
 - (3) And understand this: Your servants (the members of your body) *want* to serve Haman. They like serving the flesh! *You* have to "keep under" your body—fight it, control it.
 - (4) And your members, just like these servants, will pester you and provoke you and hound you all day long... to get you to submit to Haman. The Holy Spirit won't do that... so put Him in charge, follow Him (not Haman).
3. There is one more thing I'd like to point out in this verse: The reason Scripture gives for the servants tattling on Mordecai to get him in trouble.
 - a) (v4) "...they told Haman... for he [Mordecai] had told them that he was a Jew."
 - b) They turned him over to Haman because he told them he was a Jew! Think about that...
 - (1) Mordecai knows Haman is his enemy. Haman, being a descendant of Agag (the king of the Amalekites), must also know the Jews are his perpetual enemy.
 - (2) And yet, in spite of this, Mordecai proclaimed with boldness and confidence: I'm a Jew!
 - (3) In spite of the negative consequences... In spite of the obvious harm to himself and his position in life (his career! his reputation! his livelihood!), he told everyone he was a Jew.
 - (4) I think a lot of Christians today are intimidated into keeping silent. You'll lose your reputation... your good name... your comfort... maybe even your job. Don't. Be bold!

Conclusion:

The internal conflict in the kingdom of Ahasuerus begins: The servants want to run Mordecai.

- Mordecai will have nothing of it. He refuses to bow to Haman... and goes on about his business.
- But, the servants don't stop there. They run to Haman and tattle on Mordecai. We'll see Haman's response next week.

This morning, I think we can find our practical application in 1Corinthians 9.27.

- God hath not given us the spirit of fear... but of power... We have the power to control our members.
- We do not have to let our members control us; we can “keep under” our bodies and control them.
- Remember Paul's words in Romans 6:

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God... for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. [Rom 6.12, 13, 19]

True spirituality is not some “euphoric state of perpetual glee.” It is, rather, a decision each day to fight against the desires of the members of your body and make them serve the desires of the Holy Spirit (Scripture).

- That's what we call a “living sacrifice,” our reasonable service to God.
- Die to self. Live for Christ.
- And be bold about it. Be zealous. Will it bring you persecution? Yes. Will it cost you some comfort... maybe your reputation... maybe your job...? Yes.
 - ✓ Did that matter to Mordecai?
 - ✓ Does that matter to you?