

The Battle for Control in a Believer's Life

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Preacher: Willard Lyons

[0 : 00] That's the conundrum. That's the real dilemma here that the believer has. How do we, in essence, win that battle?

! To where the Spirit of God has the control of our lives, and the sin nature is just done what God intends for it to be done with, is just get it off its throne.

And so, it's hard. I don't know a person yet that's truly saved, that hasn't at some point in their life had difficulty with that, and still do. Now again, remember we mentioned that we will not come into that perfect image of Christ until we go to be with Him.

But it's a progressive thing for us now, that we ought to continue to do that work, and endeavor to do that work, of becoming more Christ-like. And literally, the idea is that we can't make that happen, but what it is, is our lives being yielded to the Spirit of God, so that the Spirit of God has the liberty within us to do all those things it's designed to do, and He wants to do.

And so, that's the key there. The book of Esther is a grand thing, a grand book. I just love that book. You know, if they ever made it into a movie, it would be a chick flick.

[1 : 36] It really would. It really would. You know, you've got all the drama of what takes place with the first queen, and then her having the crown removed from her, and then the story of how they go about, you know, finding a new queen, and then picking Esther, and, you know, King Ahasuerus sees her and just dearly falls in love with her, you know.

Beautiful woman, but her countenance, her spirit was such a, just drew him to her, and they, you know, they ride off into the sunset together after God uses all of that to preserve the people.

Great book. Great story. But, of course, it goes deeper than that, as Lee pointed out in his study. Perfect, beautiful picture of how God takes care lovingly of His people, and also in that provides everything that's necessary in any circumstance for Him to deliver them in His will to do with them whatever He wants to through that.

And that's something I really hope we get a hold of. Some, I'm sure, already have, but even more to a greater degree of the idea of what is it really to trust God.

Darn us, my youngest daughter, Michael, her husband, they met at Calvita at my wedding reception and ended up getting married.

[3 : 15] And that was another story, the drama and all of that. But they want to satisfy God's will. Both went to seminary and have recently been working in the Boston area.

Michael's the next former attorney. And so he was able, they put him in a ministry, and God put him in a ministry of discipleship to students at Ivy League colleges.

Michael, being a former attorney, they wanted him to go to Harvard Law School to work with the students there, the believers there. And so they did.

But watching them, and now they're on their way to Bozeman, some things happened in the ministry there that Michael cannot support, Darla cannot support, and doctrinal things, theological things.

And so they just felt God leading them just to pull out of that and directing them to Bozeman. And so they're waiting to see what God's going to do and how God's going to provide them that.

[4 : 24] But it's been quite a process of watching them. They're both very analytical people. And for Calvita and I just to watch them, we're saying to each other and saying in our minds, if they could only learn through all of this from what God has done in the past and what He's doing now to learn how even further to just simply trust Him.

Amen? Yeah, just trust Him in what He wants to do with them and through them and trust Him to provide the means to do that. Well, when we found out they were going to leave Boston and head to Bozeman without a job, we said, all right.

You know, yeah, I didn't tell them that. But I thought that and I thought, wow, I'm anxious to see just exactly what God does in all of this, what He proves Himself to be to them through that experience. And it's going to be tremendous. So that's one of the things that I really hope that we really grasp a hold of through our study here in the book of Esther, of all things, talking about and learning about more the Christian life.

So, our study, and I've put some things together here. Our study in Esther is going to be different than the normal study because there's some things that we're going to see here in that study.

[5 : 52] We're going to look at the battle within the Christian life that every Christian faces. And that's that battle for the control of the life of the believer. Now, remember, it's a spiritual battle, not a physical battle.

The Apostle Paul in Ephesians dealt with that when he said, you know, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God. And then he begins to speak about the reality that the warfare that we have is a spiritual warfare.

That there's no way at all that we in our own power can deal with that. We've got to have the strength of the Lord. So, good picture there of the fact that we need to learn to trust God and let God do in us what He wants to do through all of that.

You know, Mike, I was thinking, I was thinking through this today about yesterday when we looked at the... What is today? Wednesday. Yeah, yesterday and before that, yeah.

Yeah, that day, yeah. Well, listen, this church, we've never been to church so much in our life.

Sunday morning, Sunday night, Monday night, get to breathe Tuesday, Wednesday night.

[7 : 07] Yeah. It's all still to us just... Yeah, yeah. But anyway, I was thinking about the fruit of the Spirit that we dealt with. You know, in Galatians 5.

Paul lists there the fruit of the Spirit. We looked at that diligently Sunday night in particular. But just remember, before that, He dealt with the fruit of the natural man.

All right? The works of the natural man. And I thought to myself today, you know, you look at those two things. Those things, the sin nature produces. What do we have to do for those to become a reality in our life?

Nothing. They're natural, right? It's just a natural thing that takes place. The only thing that might make a difference is the moral upbringing of people.

That varies, of course. And so, it's a natural thing. So, when Paul lists the fruit of the Spirit, the things that the Spirit of God wants to do, they should be just as natural to the life, and they will be, as natural to the life of the believer that's yielded to the Spirit of God, as do the nature of sin and the product of the sin nature.

[8 : 25] So, just wanted to give that to you. Throw that out there. All right. So, that's what we're going to deal with. God provides a clear provision for us in His Word as to how all that can work and how we can be successful in that.

And again, yesterday, our springboard was Galatians 2.20. I've written that up here in the Amplified tonight. I've been crucified with Christ. That is, in Him I have shared His crucifixion.

It is no longer I who live, but Christ the Messiah lives in me. And the life I now live in the body I live by faith in, that is, by adherence to and reliance on and complete trust in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

I looked at that word adhere, you know, by adherence to and reliance on God. You know what the definition of that word adhere is? It's to stick to like glue.

For some reason, that really just got a hold of me. You know, here a while back, I was trying to make a, you know, cut some pieces of plexiglass and just trying to make a little plexiglass cover for a model of a ship that I built, Dad, years ago and wanted to keep it.

[9 : 51] So I wanted a cover of it so, you know, it wasn't damaged or dusty and I had the hardest time working with that plexiglass. I found some glue that said it'll adhere to anything and it did.

It did. It adhered to my fingers and to that plexiglass left little cute little glue fingerprints on the plexiglass that you never could get off.

So, that adheres and that's what he says here in the passage in the Amplified. We, it's Christ that lives in us in the life I live now in the body I live by the faith.

That is, by adhering and in reliance upon the Christ. Sticking to him. And boy, again, we're going to find that that is the key to what, to what he's trying to say.

So, again, the question for us is, have we come to the place in our Christian life where we have turned loose of what we are in the old Adam and embraced the fullness of Christ within us?

[11:00] Not just Christ, but the fullness of Christ within us. Have we done that? Now, again, we acknowledge the truth of it in our minds, but have we allowed it to penetrate our spirit and as such then be expressed through our life and through our living?

Have we done that? And the difficulty is here, we cannot be used of God to the fullest extent he wants to use us in the purposes he has for us without doing that.

Yeah. Yeah. I don't know about you, but I want God to use me as completely as he has designed to use me.

The only way that's going to happen is if I surrender and let the fullness of Christ become a reality in working in my life. Now, I say to you to begin with, and I've mentioned this before, the basis of our study tonight is coming out of a book written by a name, a man by the name of W. Ian Thomas, Dr. or Major Thomas, a tremendous figure. Let me read. This comes off of the fly leaf of the book that he wrote from which this study arrives.

[12:21] It says he's born in London. He was educated at Merchant Taylor School and London University. Converted at the age of 12. He decided at 15 to become a missionary doctor.

And Dr. V. Raymond Edmond in his book, who was then president of Wheaton College, wrote and said, at the university, Major Ian Thomas entered into a round of activity which at the age of 19 had reduced him to a state of complete exhaustion spiritually.

Now, that activity was activity of serving God and, you know, quote unquote, doing things for God. He was so vibrant in that and so diligent in that, it exhausted him physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

It was at this point in his life that he discovered the secret for the Lord told him, quote, for seven years with utmost sincerity, you have been trying to live for me on my behalf.

the life that I have, excuse me, the life that I for seven years have been waiting to live through you. See the difference?

[13:42] He said, you've been living for me for seven years trying to satisfy what you felt was my design for you and I've been waiting that long to live my life through you. And so at that point is when he began to see, began to speak about the Christian life, about the life of Christ in the believer and hence wrote the book that we had mentioned before.

Firstly, it was titled The Right Man In, Wrong Man Out, Then Power in the Palace, Then If I Perish, I Perish, written in 1967. So that's the basis of what we're going to do and what we're going to be using in our study.

Each of the characters in the book of Esther in that beautiful story represents some the various elements as far as the Christian life of the believer is concerned.

Now, of course, that's not to say that's the divine purpose of God writing the book or having the book written and having it pinned down, but it sure is a picture that's there. Just as Jesus used parables in his teaching, this is kind of the same thing as an allegory out of the book of Esther. So, I hope it excites you as much as it has me through the years and trust that we'll be able to present it well.

[15:07] All right. So, we'll see the conflict in that as well as the remedy that God gives us for it. So, hopefully, it'll help us more fully understand that battle within us.

One of the most difficult aspects of the Christian life that most believers have is really coming into an understanding of the work of the Spirit of God within us. What is he really there for?

What is he really trying to do? We know basically he's there to guide us, to direct us into the will of God, to empower us to do that, but what about the work of molding and shaping our lives to the extent that we are more and more surrendered to his control so that God can do that.

So, the purpose of the study is this, to enable us to gain greater understanding of the Holy Spirit's work within us and then to bring us further in our spiritual development and then our ability to totally yield to God.

Now, open your Bibles if you would then to Esoter chapter 1. How many of you have had a chance to read through the book of Esoter before tonight? Alright, some of you have. Alright. So, remind you what takes place here.

[16:29] King Ahasuerus, king of Media, is holding a banquet for all the powers that be in the kingdom, Media Persia.

In that banquet, a lot of revelry going on and the king was a bit inebriated.

Alright. Lee would have a better word for that, but having studied that in proper pronunciation of the words, what's the proper word for inebriated, Lee?

Drunk. Alright, thank you. Drunk is the word. Yeah. I'm trying to be nice. Hey, yeah, yeah. And in that stupor, if you will, in that stupor, he decides he wants to show off Queen Esther, his, no, not Queen Esther, Vashti, Queen Vashti, his wife.

So he sends word to her to put on all the royal garb and the crown in particular and present herself before the king. And she was a beautiful woman.

[17:41] He wanted everybody to know how beautiful a wife he's got as queen. She refused to do so. She wasn't going to be made a spectacle. And so she refused to do so and that created quite a, quite a difficulty in the palace.

And so the end result of that is Queen Esther has her crown removed. She's no longer to be queen, no longer to come into the presence of the king.

And so she's vanquished. She's gone. And so the king is now without a queen. So we pick up, if you will, in chapter 1, verse 19.

Notice what it says. If it pleased the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it not be altered, that Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus, and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she.

So, the stage is now set. God's providential work, a hand at work here, is setting the stage for doing something that's going to need to be done in the days ahead.

[19:10] Vashti is gone. They need another queen. Now, notice with me, if you will, another thing here, pick up in verse 20, when the king's decree which he shall make shall be publicized throughout his empire, for it is great, all the wives shall give to their husbands honor, both to great and small.

Another problem arose here. If Vashti got away with that, what was it going to happen? You talk about the first women's liberation movement, that would have started it.

All the wives of the kingdom would say, aha, Queen Vashti did that, I just don't have to do what my husband tells me to do. So, the guys didn't like that, no doubt his counselors were men, alright, and so they wanted that published all throughout the land.

The same pleased the king and the princess, and the king did according to the word of Mimucan, for he sent letters into all the king's provinces, into every province, according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language, and to every man should bear rule in his own house, and that it should be publicized according to the language of every people.

So, the threat is now, the threat of the women's liberation is now over, the publication has been made, and things are fine. But look in chapter 2, just a moment.

[20:38] After these, in verse 1, after these things, when the wrath of King Ahasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her.

Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, let there be fair young virgins sought for the king. Let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan, the palace, to the house of the women unto the custody of Haggai, the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women, and let their things for purification be given them.

Now, what the problem was here, they were fearful that King Ahasuerus was changing his mind about Vashti. You know, his anger was finally appeased, time had passed, wounds were healed, and they were fearful.

He was probably given indication here that he wanted to bring her back. Not the fact that he didn't love her, but he wanted to bring her back, is what they were thinking. And so they were going to head that off by suggesting to him, let's search all the land for all the women that are eligible to serve as queen, meet all the requirements, and serve as queen.

And so that decree went out, and they searched and searched, and did that. And of course, we know that in chapter 2, in verse 5, in Shushan the palace, there was a certain Jew whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jer, the son of Shammai, the son of Kish, a Benjamite, who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity, which had been carried away with Jeconiah, the king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, had carried away.

[22 : 29] He brought up Hadash, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful, whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took her for his own daughter.

Came to pass when the king's commandment, at his decree, was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Haggai, that Esther was brought also into the king's house, to the custody of Haggai, keeper of the women.

So, Esther is ushered to the palace. Now, we know, as we go through the study, go through the passage, that Esther wins the favor.

You know, it takes 12 months of purification for those ladies before they come before the king. And so, the time has come now for Esther to be brought before the king.

most of the women you recall, all of the women were gone through the purification process, soaking in myrrh, and taking all types of bath ointments, and all of those things.

[23 : 37] But then they were also, had things that they were, you know, able to choose to put on as apparel, ornaments, and so forth, to go in before the king and to impress him.

The only thing Esther wanted, you remember, was what was required of her to wear into the presence of the king. She wanted nothing else. No ornaments, nothing else.

If he was going to choose her, he's going to have to choose her because of who she is, in her personality, in her spirit, and that's what happened. He falls in love with her in verse number 17, and she then becomes queen.

Now, down the road then, comes a picture of something that's going to happen, down the road, and we find our attention brought to a man by the name of Haman.

And we'll look more about Haman. But Haman was an enemy of the Jew, we'll see that a little bit later. And the stepfather of Esther, Mordecai, would not bow down before Haman, as required, and made him even more furious.

[24 : 53] And so, he plays a tremendous picture, part in the picture that is painted here in the palace. So, his importance shows up, but then also even more so than the importance of Esther.

Now, I've put for you there as well a little diagram. There he is. he's got a smiley face. He's a happy fellow. You should have seen it when we went through the study in Copan years ago, before the days of overhead projectors.

Remember the little, I mean these projectors, remember the overhead projectors? You know, you got to write on the little sheets and stuff. I had to use stick man.

So, y'all feel privileged we're updated and you get a better image here. All right. You're well aware of man's makeup. Body, soul, and spirit.

The triunity of man and all of those type things. All right. We take a look and see what all that speaks of. The body, of course, when we realize it, the body is simply the instrument through which the soul expresses itself.

[26 : 12] Everything, every activity, every action, the body does. And what we do daily in our activities and expression of the soul.

All right. Now, the soul, we define, of course, as the mind, the will, and the emotions. So, that's where all the thinking takes place.

That's where we exercise the will of what we want to do and how we're emotionally affected by whatever, circumstances, whatever it may be in our lives.

All those are projected by the activity of the body. We're going to respond. The body will respond to the mind, the will, and the emotion.

All right. And then comes the spirit. The spirit, we kind of say, is that part of us that has really the most central, direct connection with God. All right. The real us, if you will.

[27 : 13] So, all these three are going to work together for us in the study that we see. Now, each of the main characters of the story in the book of Esther are representative of one of these aspects, if you will.

All right. The flesh, of course, is the nature of sin, the natural man. I forgot to put that up there. The flesh, the natural man, the sin nature, whatever you want to call it, is that part that dwells within us that we're born with, that gives us a disconnect with God, if you will.

All right. So, the main players, here's what they symbolize. King Ahasuerus of Persia, you can write these on, that's why I put the little lines down there for you. King Ahasuerus of Persia, he's going to represent for us the soul of man.

All right. The mind, the will, and the emotion. That's King Ahasuerus. And then, the kingdom of Persia, that consisted of 127 provinces, that's going to represent for us the human body. And then, Haman. You remember? Isn't it funny how silly things come to your mind sometimes even when you're thinking of biblical things?

[28 : 41] You remember the old cartoon on TV, Dastardly and Muttly? How many remember Dastardly and Muttly? Okay, a few of you do.

That word dastardly somehow comes to mind when I think of Haman. Okay, he's going to represent the flesh, the natural man. All right. And Mordecai, this is the stepfather of Esther, the one that took her in and raised her as a daughter when her mom and dad died.

He's going to represent the Holy Spirit. Then, Esther. Only thing left is the human spirit.

She is going to represent the human spirit. Now, the key to all of this is going to be influence. All right. as you unfold the story of Esther, in particular, you see the influence of Haman in the palace. And what he does with that, what that creates, so you look at the idea of the natural man, the flesh, that is ensconced in the palace, that is persuading and influencing the king, which is the spirit of man, or the soul of man, rather, I'm sorry, the soul of man, the mind wielding emotion, and everything that Haman does.

[30 : 18] Every decree that goes down, and he comes to the point, you remember, he comes to the point in the kingdom, where he's Ahasuerus' right-hand man. He has the liberty to write decrees, all of those type of things, and just hand them to the king for his signature.

So, anything he does, anything he wants to do, in the kingdom, in the palace, has King Ahasuerus' is okay.

So, you see the influence, it begins to speak of the influence of the natural man, upon the soul of man, upon our mind, our will, and our emotion, and everything that Haman decrees, and Haman does, it affects the entire kingdom.

Every person of those 127 provinces are affected by the decrees that are made from the palace.

So, that's a good study that we're going to do.

So, so, with those thoughts in mind, I think that's all I've got for it, yeah, with those thoughts in mind, not that you don't have any other studies to do this week, but look through the book of Esther again with those, that allegory in mind, those representations in mind, and see if you can't dig out where all this is going to go, all right, because it's a beautiful picture, beautiful story, of to see how God wants to work within the life of the believer.