

I. Introduction to Bible Study and Christ in Every Book

What we have been doing on Sunday morning is we have been in existence now for about seven years. All churches that go through this process have this basic problem. It is a good problem to have, but nevertheless, it is one that has got to be solved, and it simply runs like this: We had, when we started, a bunch of people that really wanted to learn the Bible. So we worked very hard for three or four years, really building the Word of God into their lives. Those people, along with the older folks who helped me start this church, who had been with me for twenty or thirty years, really now form the foundation of what this church is all about.

In the process of that, God has blessed us so much that we have now a host of younger Christians in the last year, year and a half, that have come in that really have a desire to learn the Bible. So what we have done is we have tried to expedite that by getting some specific things taught to you that will help you. We have talked about how that on Thursday night I took four or five Thursday nights and I showed you the best way to break down the notes and build your own study Bible. We went through that.

Then I told you that I am going to purposely focus on things that help you learn the Bible. One of the things that we do on Thursday night is we take the first ten or fifteen or twenty minutes of Thursday night Bible study and I give you a complete breakdown of a book in the Bible: God's outline of that book, how it is systematically laid out so you can better understand it. We did Leviticus last Thursday night.

Then I told you something about your Bible that most of you did not know: that Christ is the main figure in this Bible. He is not the theme of the Bible. The theme of the Bible is the Second Coming of Christ. But the main figure in the Bible, around which the Bible is built, is obviously the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. What God did when He wrote the Bible is He built every book in the Bible around the Lord Jesus Christ. So every book in the Bible is going to portray some character quality of the Lord Jesus Christ. When I saw this a number of years ago, it absolutely revolutionized my concept of the Bible. It taught me more about myself and my relationship with God than probably any other single thing that I did.

So I told you that what we were going to do before we get into some of the stuff we want to do a little bit later, we were going to take and we were going to go through a couple of books every week, basically showing you how Christ is portrayed in every book of the Bible. I showed you last week when we came through a couple of books, Ezra and Nehemiah, how that some of the books go together to form a theme. We saw that in 1 Samuel, 1 Kings, and 1 Chronicles. When we get into the next set of books, which is commonly called the Wisdom Books, you are going to see how they fit together in an incredible way to show you every aspect of your relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. The Book of Esther: Christ Our Advocate

We are at the book of Esther today. I want to take the time this morning and I want to show you the book of Esther probably like you have never seen it and help you understand it, at least from how Christ is portrayed in this book. The book of Esther stands alone as one of the most unique books in all the Bible. I told you that Christ is portrayed in every book of the Bible. In this particular book, Christ is portrayed as our advocate. The New Testament verse for this is 1 John 2:1.

1 John 2:1

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

This book ties itself to no other book in the Bible. This is where it is very unique. One of the things about this book is it is only one of two books in your Bible where you do not find God mentioned in any way, shape, or form. The other book would be the Song of Solomon. You may ask why those two books are the only two books that God is not mentioned in, in any way, shape, or form. If you were here last Thursday night, you know the answer to that when I took the last question and I laid out God dealing with the nation of Israel as His wife and Christ dealing with the church as His bride. You will understand why these two books are like that. These two books are the only two books in the Bible that are named after women. In both books, you have a marriage.

In this book, you will not find God mentioned in the book of Esther in any way, shape, or form. There is no reference to God. You will not find the word "Lord." You will not find any reference to Christ in any form or fashion. It is like God disappeared from the face of the earth. In this particular book, you will not find any man or any character in the book who even has a dialogue or talks with God. You will find no one praying to God. You will find no dialogue like you did with Moses with God. You will find no visit from God like we saw in Genesis 17 and 18 where God met with Abraham. Absolutely nothing. Even the author is unknown, who really for certain wrote this book. It is just a story found in your Bible that unfolds sometime around 485 B.C. That would be about 485 years before Christ shows up.

The fact that God is not mentioned has bothered so many scholars over the years, and it is so apparent when they read it. It is so out of context with the rest of the Bible that they had to do something about it. Around about 400 A.D., when Jerome wrote Jerome's Latin Vulgate, which became the official Bible of the Roman Catholic Church, the scholars were so bothered by the fact that Esther had no reference of God that Jerome added six more chapters to the book. He did that for the purpose of adding God in the book so they could all sit back and smile and say, "Well, now we have got God in the book. We feel better about that." But around here, that is not what we do with the Bible. We take the Bible the way it is and we look for the answer of things like this, trusting God knew what He was doing when He wrote the book.

One of the great verses in the Bible is 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

1 Thessalonians 2:13

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

Here in this church, we believe the Bible is the absolute and infallible Word of God. It needs nothing to be tinkered with. It needs to be changed in no way, shape, or form. We take it just the way that God gave it to us.

III. The Principle of Contrast in Bible Study

One of the greatest keys to studying your Bible when you start to put it together is understanding how God uses the concept of contrast. By contrast, I mean you look for things that do not seem to fit in your Bible, something that stands out, something that looks like it is opposite of what it really should be. Matthew 15 is a great example. In Matthew 15, you have a chapter where the Lord seemingly is not having a very good day. There is a woman who has a problem, and it is a legitimate problem. She is not somebody who is just wasting the Lord's time. She has a legitimate issue with her daughter, and she goes to the Lord, and the Lord blows her off. She goes back a second time. He not only blows her off then, He insults her. She comes back a third time, and then He not only insults her, He brings up her racial status, and basically just three times He rejects what she does, what she comes and asks Him for.

Yet you look at that and you think to yourself, "Now how is that? How is that fitting with the Bible where it says, 'Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you'?" How does that fit in, "Whatever your needs are, just ask"? She had a need, she casted her care, and He kicked her through the goalpost of life. We look at situations like that and we think, "Wow, what is going on here?" I will tell you something: it is places like that that God uses the contrast between the way we know Him to be and the way that He acts in this particular scenario that teaches you a great truth. If you ever want to learn about your prayer life, if you ever want to learn why you do not get your prayers answered when you think you ought to get them answered, if you want to ever understand about an intimate relationship with Christ and how to get your prayers answered when you want to get them answered, go to Matthew 15. That is a great story.

Remember Thursday night somebody asked a question back there in 2 Kings 8. It was John. 2 Kings 8:6-9. John was reading through the Bible and he saw a place where it talked about the Ark of the Covenant. When he saw the Ark of the Covenant there, it only listed one thing in that Ark. John remembered reading back before that there were three things in that Ark, and now he sees a difference. He saw a contrast. One place that said there were three things before, now he finds out he is reading that it only says one. He wanted to know what happened to the other two. If you were there Thursday night, you saw how that developed into one of the greatest teachings you are ever going to find anywhere in the Bible.

You see, when you study the Bible, you look at what does not seem to fit in your Bible, something that stands out. When we study the Bible, we are not searching for mistakes because we know there are no mistakes. We are looking at places like this and places like Matthew 15 and 2 Kings 8 that do not fit with the rest of the Bible, and then looking to find out and to

reconcile those places, understanding that both places are absolutely correct. This is called in 2 Timothy 2:15, "rightly dividing the word of truth." You and I are starting to find out why both places are absolutely correct and trying to find out what God is trying to show you through the contrast. This is very, very, very important in the Bible. This is what we have in the book of Esther.

IV. Doctrinal Significance of Esther and the Times of the Gentiles

Very quickly, let me show you how the book of Esther sets up doctrinally before we come back and look at it in the aspect of how it is going to fit into you. In Esther, here is what you have. It is so clear if you wonder why the world is the way that it is, why the Middle East is boiling over, why America is on the verge of a disaster, and why everything around this world is in a mess. If you ever wanted to figure it out, the answer lies in the book of Esther from a doctrinal standpoint.

You know what happens in Esther? A Gentile queen gets dethroned. Her name is Vashti. Then we have a coronation of a Jewish queen. Her name is Esther. I have always thought it was interesting, and I am a great student of history because I do not believe you can really understand the Bible or study the Bible without understanding history, because the God of the Bible is also the God of history. I find an interesting parallel. I find it back there in Genesis when God began to call Abraham out. Now we know Abraham is the man who begins the formulation of the nation of Israel. God picked the man Abraham, and He picks him and He brings him out, and from Abraham, who to this day is called the father of the Jews, He establishes the nation of Israel in the land of Israel many years after he dies.

I do not know if you know this or not, but that story takes place around 1900 to 1918 B.C. Yet on the other side of the cross, we find the calling back of the nation of Israel through a man by the name of Theodore Herzl, who starts the Zionist movement. Believe it or not, he starts the Zionist movement, which led for the nation of Israel to get back in the land as they did in 1948. He starts that movement around 1900 A.D., which comes to the point in 1918 with the Balfour Declaration, and then moves its way right up till they are becoming a nation and they are back in the land. Except one is 1900 B.C., the other one is 1900 A.D. The only thing that men never learn from history is men never learn anything from history.

You have heard me say it many, many times: World War I got the land ready for the Jew, and World War II got the Jew ready for the land, and in 1948, Israel is back in the land. Personally, when you look at this thing from a doctrinal standpoint, this is a picture of the Laodicean church period. This is a picture of the end, in God's mind, of the times of the Gentiles. A Gentile queen gets taken off the world domination throne, and a Jewish queen is set back on the throne. Exactly what God is going to do in His mind when He establishes the nation of Israel.

We saw this almost in every aspect for us studying church history. Tuesday night we saw the seven great awakenings, and I showed you how that the last great awakening falls right into this time period. We are living in a day where there are churches on every street corner. We are living

in a day and age where 85% of the American population claims to be a Christian. Yet in Revelation 3, the Bible says about the Laodicean church period, which starts about 1900 and runs up to the rapture of the church, that Jesus Christ is on the outside of His own church knocking on the door trying to get back in. You are going to find that the book of Esther, in my own personal opinion, shows that the times of the Gentiles probably in God's mind ended somewhere between 1900 and 1918.

This shows you another thing here that I think is very important. This may not mean anything to most of you, but to me, seeing things like this really focuses on what God is trying to do. I do not know if you know this or not, but this thing takes place around 400 and some B.C. Do you know what is going on in the world, around the world at this particular time? When the book of Esther is laying itself out, do you have any idea what is going on around in the world? If you go to the history books, you go to secular schools, or you go take a history course, you will find that during this period of time we find the invasion of Greece. We find the rise of one of the greatest Gentile leaders that ever graced this planet, Alexander the Great. We find the great world city of Athens. We find Sparta, and we all know the story about the 300 Spartans, the Battle of Thermopylae, where they held off and ended the defeat of Persia.

There is so much going on around the rest of the world this time, but I want you to see something: God never records one thing about that. He never says one thing about what Alexander the Great is doing, what anybody else is doing. All God is concerned about is the dethroning of a Gentile queen and a Jewish queen coming to the throne and Israel getting back in that land. You look around this world today, and I will tell you, you want to find where you ought to be paying attention. If you want to find God today, I will tell you where you find God. You do not find God in what we call New Testament Christianity. You do not find God in all of the stuff that is going on around the world today in the name of Christ. No, no, no, no. If you want to find God, you are looking for God where God is already beginning the process to reestablish the nation of Israel. They are in the land, and right now we are sitting on a powder keg. Right now, one of these days in Iraq or Iran or someplace over there, it is all going to boil over and explode, and you are going to see this thing come to the full circle because we are at the end of the times of the Gentiles.

V. Practical Application: Standing Alone and Facing Opposition

Now, let us look at this book from a practical application. You have got your history lesson. Let us look at it from a practical standpoint. The Bible says that in this book, we see Christ typified as our advocate. Let me define the word "advocate" for you, and the definitive passage on this will be 1 John 2:1. The word "advocate" simply means that you defend somebody by argument. It means that you stand up for somebody to vindicate them. It means that you support them through a tough time. It means that when there is an issue, you take their side over the wrong side. It means that you basically stand up for somebody.

The great reason why this book stands alone and has no relationship with any other book in the Bible, I think, is very instructive too, because when you look at this from a practical standpoint, not how it deals in history or future prophetic events, but you look at this book and you put it into an everyday practical life concept where what you experience as a child of God, it becomes invaluable. I think the reason why this book stands alone and really connects itself to no other book is because as a child of God, you are going to have to learn, if you are going to be successful in the ministry or whatever God has called you to do, you are going to have to develop the attitude of standing alone. As we get closer to the rapture of the church and the Second Coming of Christ, that is going to become more real in your life every day.

If, as a child of God, if God ever gives you a ministry or some of you young men ever pastor a church, very quickly you better develop an attitude that no matter how many people God gives you, that in your attitude of heart, in your mind of what you do, it is just you and Him. People ask me all the time, "What kind of a church do we have?" Charlie came up here when Charlie preached, and Charlie is a Southern Baptist, but he is on the good side of the Southern Baptist, and Charlie has been threatened to be kicked out of the Southern Baptist many, many times because Charlie sticks up for what needs to be done. He has pressed some real issues down there, but he knew really nothing about our church. So we are out there eating dinner one night, and he says, "Now, you are a Baptist church, I know that," he says, "but what kind? Are you an independent Baptist church, or are you, what kind of Baptist church are you? Are you fundamental? Are you independent?"

I said, "Well, Charlie," I said, "you know, I do not really like names connected with churches because he knew we do not hang out with anybody. We are not a member of any fellowship. We are not with the Southside, Upside Down, Eastside, or the Westside. We just stand alone." So that would lead people in his mind to think that we are independent. Now, I do not like the concept of a church being called independent. I know the reason for it is because they are independent of anybody else, but I just do not like the word "independent" because when you get independent, sometimes that means you get so independent, you are independent of God. I told Charlie, I said, "Well, I guess you would classify me as an independent. We classify ourselves as dependent." I do not want to ever be independent of what God is. I want to be dependent on God. So if somebody says, "What kind of church do you go to? Is it independent?" No, it is a dependent. We depend on God for everything. We do not look for the outside of anything. We do not have any bake sales, rookie sales, rummage sales, or anything else. We figure that this is God's church. God always pays for what He has ordered. If it is not worth taking care of, then we have to reevaluate it and go sell cars someplace.

The book teaches two great concepts, and the first concept that we are going to develop here is that if you stand for God, and you see this in the book of Esther, if you are going to take a stand for God, you are going to pay a price for it. If I would not have got this book down twenty-some years ago, I would not be in the ministry today. It is a simple fact, ladies and gentlemen, we do not like to deal with it. We do not like to think about it, but it is true: the more you do for God, the more opposition you are going to get. I do not know of anything in life when something starts moving that it does not cause friction. That is just the way that it is.

Ecclesiastes 1:18

For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.

The more you learn, the more it is going to cause you grief, because the more you learn, the more you have to deal with. The more you learn, the more you grow, the more you take responsibility of leadership, the more you are going to get clobbered. "And he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." Or as my old father in the Lord, Melchizedek, used to say, "The higher up the ladder of leadership you climb, the bigger target you are and will be." That is a true statement. In ministry, it is absolutely the reverse also: the less you do for God, the less opposition you will have in life. Unfortunately, that is the road that many people take.

Now, I do not think you ought to go out looking for trouble. I know that a lot of people get themselves in bad situations because of their stupidity, not because they are suffering for God because they are doing what is right. But I do know the Bible says in 2 Timothy 3:12:

2 Timothy 3:12

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

I also know that Romans 8:17 says that if you do not suffer with Him, you will not reign with Him. I know that. Now listen, and I mean this right now, you have to evaluate your own life. But we are getting into this book on Esther, and Esther shows you some things that you need to learn. As a child of God, if there are not some people out there right now today that absolutely hate you, that talk about you, that slander you, that lie about you, I mean, some of God's people are so spineless. They will never stand for anything. Now I understand what I am saying. You get people out there that do not use any common sense. They go out there and just shoot their mouth off, and they do not know what they are talking about. I am not talking about that. What I am saying is simply this: you cannot take a stand for God without having some kind of opposition. You are going to see that in the book of Esther as we start to come through this.

I do not know any man in the Bible who ever did anything for God. I do not know of any man in history that did anything for God. We have come through church history. We talked about George Whitefield, and we look at the good side of George Whitefield, and we look how great he preached and how he brought about the Great Awakening that really stirred his country that lasted for forty or fifty years. When we read the accounts of George Whitefield and read about that, we think everybody loved him. But everybody did not love him. For him to stand up and preach and influence the founding fathers of this country, he paid a price for that. He was shot at, I do not know how many times. One time he was preaching, five guys tried to shoot him, and a gun went off. Someone came and he missed him every time, but he had bullet holes in his coat, and one went through his Bible, but they never touched him. He was preaching one time in Massachusetts, and a guy kicked in the back door with a flintlock pistol, and he kept preaching. He came up and put the gun to his head and moved all around in different threatening positions, and George Whitefield never stopped preaching. Finally, the guy stepped right in front of him, cocked the pistol, put it in his head, pulled the trigger. The gun exploded and killed the guy.

Whitefield preached the sermon. We look at him and read him in history and we think, "Wow, everybody loved him."

Jonathan Edwards, a counterpart of George Whitefield, he was kicked out of his own church because of what he preached. I think of Billy Sunday. Billy Sunday single-handedly in the early twenties brought about prohibition. He was a professional baseball player, and he got saved, and he turned his life over to God, and he started a campaign of preaching across this country. He brought in one of the great awakenings. He single-handedly, through his preaching, put an end to booze and liquor in the United States, and single-handedly, through his preaching and the Temperance Act, turned around the concept and brought about prohibition. He was hated for it. If any of you ever saw the movie Elmer Gantry with Burt Lancaster, Elmer Gantry was put out by a guy by the name of Sinclair Lewis. Sinclair Lewis hated Billy Sunday with a passion. Billy Sunday took all the booze out of everybody's life, and Sinclair Lewis specifically put that movie out across this nation. You can still see it, and it was about an evangelist that was a fornicator, that was a drinker, that was a drunkard, that was a low-life slime that was stealing people's money by deceit. He did that whole thing to slander the greatest evangelist, Billy Sunday.

I am telling you, old J. Frank Norris. We would not even have a King James Bible this morning if it would not have been for J. Frank Norris, and most people do not even know who J. Frank Norris is. To this day, down in Texas, you will find people that when you bring up J. Frank Norris's name, they will buy you lunch. If you bring him up, they will punch your lights out. He probably was one of the most hated men in the early forties and the fifties, and he stood against the whole Southern Baptist Convention. One man, and the world hated him. He would go into towns and hold revivals, and these towns were run by corrupt politicians. They were run by corrupt sheriffs. He would name names and pass out telephone numbers. They hated him. They tried to run him out of town. They came to the place where he came into a town, and a whole lynch mob was down there going to hang him, and somebody said, "Hey, Frank, do not you know that there is a crowd down there going to hang you?" He walked down to the crowd, got on the back of a pickup truck, preached the message of the gospel, and ten guys got saved.

One time a guy called him up on the phone, and he had exposed him through the pulpit, and the guy called him up on the phone and said, "I am going to come down there and kill you." J. Frank Norris said, "Well, I will be here till three." The guy walked into his church, into his office, pulled a pistol, and was going to kill him, and J. Frank beat him to the draw and shot him dead in the office. You suffer persecution. You do. There has never been anybody down in church history, in the history of our own country, who took a stand for God that did not. I am saying this as a child of God: if there is not somebody in your life today who is out to get you, if there is not somebody in your life, this idea, this spineless mindset that you get along with everybody and you are afraid to take a hard stand on anything, always trying to walk the middle of the of the ground, staying squeaky clean, you will never take a stand for anything.

In our story here, you have an example of that. You have a picture of a man named Mordecai, and he is a key player in this book. Mordecai is a man who stands up for his people, in this case, the nation of Israel. Mordecai is a good man, and he is a good leader. What he does in this book is take God's side against the adversaries of God's people. Then we have another man, his name

is Haman. Haman is a wicked man who lives his life for one reason: to get all he can get, to destroy the work of God. Haman hates Esther. He hates the Jews being in any position of authority, and he hates Mordecai. Here the stories line up for you and for me, and we see the first great concept laid out for us.

If you are going to get into this fight before the Lord comes back, and again, I am not talking about through stupidity. I am talking about just doing what is right and taking your stand and calling it as it is. If you are going to get into this fight and take a stand for God, you better know this: there will always be a, and if you do not write anything else down, write this down, there will always be a Haman in your life who is going to try to stop you. When you see this great book where God is not mentioned, where it seems like God is nowhere to be found, you see how it does affect you in ministry. That is really the question today.

Let us see what Haman's issue is. Let us turn over to Esther 3, and I am going to read a few verses here. Pick it up in verse 1 and we will come down through verse 6. Let us see what Haman's problem is.

Esther 3:1-6

1 After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him.

2 And all the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, bowed, and revered Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence.

3 Then the king's servants, which were in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king's commandment?

4 Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand: for he had told them that he was a Jew.

5 And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath.

6 And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai.

There is your problem. The problem comes down here that Mordecai will not bow down to him. There is a reason for it, and this is where you have to know your Bible to see how these things go together. Remember back there in 1 Samuel when Saul was the king, and he was told to take this king and cut him up in little pieces, and he did not do it. He let the king go, and he let the sheep go, and Samuel comes in there, and Samuel said, "Did you do what God said?" And he said, "Yeah, sure I did." And he says, "Then what is the sound of those sheep?" He did not kill them all, and he did not kill the guy. He did not hack him up like God told him to. Now this guy here, Haman, is connected to that man, and Haman is an enemy of God, and Mordecai will not acknowledge him in any way, shape, or form.

You know what people in life who do not want to do what is right, saved people, you know what they want more than anything else? They want credibility. I was working in the garage yesterday getting some things cleaned out, and I saw two shadows coming up the driveway, and I did not even have to think about it. Here it is Saturday, and sure enough, two Jehovah's Witnesses were coming to my door. I do not have time to mess with them, so I said to Buddy, "Buddy, would you like to become a Jehovah's Witness?" Buddy does not want to be a Jehovah's Witness. No, Buddy is my dog. He is my Buddy, but he is not anybody else's Buddy. Anyway, and the guy came up, and he said, "Sir, I know you are busy, can I give you a tract?" And I said, "Yeah," I said, "I have five or six friends. Can I get one for them?" "Oh, absolutely." He gave me five or six more. Well, that is what you do. See, he did not want to talk, he did not want to witness, but I just took six tracts away from him that he will not be able to give to somebody else. So that is how that works. I would have told him my whole family was in town for a reunion, I did 200 of them. I did not think he would go for that, but anyway, I am sitting there and I am thinking about it.

Now, I am for going out and reaching people. I am. But you know why a Jehovah's Witness, I gave you guys some statistics that about 1960, your Jehovah's Witnesses spent over like 131 million hours knocking on doors. You know why they go out and do that? Now, I know that they think they are working the way they have it. I know that. But you know why they do those things? You know why people who are a member of cults try so hard to get you to believe that they are the real deal? Because their number one problem is they have no credibility. I mean, it is a standard joke. Does anybody here want to be a Jehovah's Witness? I do not think so. I mean, the very word, nobody wants to be one. Of course, it is a situation where they want the desire credibility. So they are always out knocking on doors. They are always trying to convince you that they are right.

I do not ever spend five minutes convincing somebody that I am right. I may spend a lot of time convincing them they are a sinner and need to go to heaven, but I do not have to spend the time defending the fact that I am right. I do not have a credibility factor as a New Testament Christian. I have a long heritage of what I believe. Obviously, they do not. But that is what people want. People when they get out of fellowship with God, saved people, they are just like the Jehovah's Witnesses. Only they are saved. When they get out of fellowship with God and they do not want you to know it, or they want to still pretend to be right with God, you know what they do? They want to get credibility. They will still come to church because they know if they do not come to church, you know that something is wrong. So they will come to church. They will get involved in just enough stuff to keep their credibility. That is Haman. That is Haman. When you find a Christian like Mordecai who will not play the game, who calls it the way that it is, who will not pretend that you are right when you are not right, you see what a problem begins to develop here. In other words, the translation of this: Haman is a wicked man who is God's enemy, and he wants to be recognized by the Jews as a good man, but Mordecai holds his ground.

What follows is Haman's plan. He gets full of rage. What follows is Haman's plan to get rid of Mordecai and God's people. In Esther 3, he begins to slander the people of God. He lies about them, and he puts a plan together to kill Mordecai. This is when most people are going to get off the spiritual ministry bus. When people start to come after you, when people start to assassinate

your character, when people start to lie about you, when they start to take half-truths and develop them for their own personal gain because they want you to look bad because they do not want to look bad when they are bad. It is a great truth found in Esther. I am telling you, the first great lesson is simple: you do God's work right, and you will have a fan club and a hate club.

VI. God as Our Advocate: The Principle of the Net

The great truth of Esther is this: even though you cannot find God named one time, and it seems like God is nowhere to be found in this book, God is behind the scenes in every chapter of this book. He is fulfilling the role of being our advocate. It brings to light something that I preach to you guys all the time, but it illustrates it in a way that maybe will really help you see it: God always takes His people's side. I do not care if it is Israel in the book of Esther or it is your life every day taking a stand for Him. God wants you to be an advocate for Him as much as He wants to be one for you. This is the problem. God wants you to stand up for Him.

I remember one time an old guy that used to hang out with me and Mel, his name was Bill Eakin. Bill Eakin was a tall, thin guy, a wiry guy, but just the nicest guy in the world. We were all going down to revival one place, one time down there someplace, I forget what it was. We stopped off to get a cup of coffee and a piece of pie before we had to go preach. We are sitting in there, and we are sitting around a little table, and there are a bunch of farmers in there and a bunch of roughneck rowdies in there, and they are using God's name in vain and just, they are sitting at the counter up there, a couple of big truck drivers, and they are just four-lettering words up one side and the other, just going to town on God's name.

So we are getting ready to leave, and Bill says, "Here, you take, I will take care of the check. I will be back in a moment." I am standing, I am just a young guy, and I watched Bill walk over to this line of the roughest truck drivers or farmers or bullies or whatever you want. He walked over there and he says, "Hey guys," he says, "I heard you talking about a friend of mine." And he says, "I just wanted you to know what you are saying is not true." The guy looked at each other and he says, "Well, what friends do we know that you have? I do not know any of you. What friend are you talking about?" And he said, "Jesus Christ." He said, "He is my friend. I heard you guys damning Him over here and saying all kinds of things derogatory about Him. I just came over to let you know that I can tell you that is not true about Him. You have got some bad information, and just to help you out, can I give you guys?" And they were so dumbfounded. They absolutely did not know what to say. They actually took the tracts and said, "Thank you."

God wants you to stand up for Him. What is wrong with Him standing up for you, but you are not standing up for Him? Now I am not saying you have to go looking for a fight, but as you really do what is right with God, the fight will come to you. You will not have to look for it. But when it does come, stand up for what is right. If it is wrong, it is wrong. If it is right, it is right. It is just that simple. Now I am not saying there are circumstances where you do not work through some things with people, but the bottom line is simply this: at the end of the day, right is right and wrong is wrong, and God will stand up for you. The question is, will you stand up for Him? That takes courage. I promise you, if you do that in the right way, in the right spirit, you are going to get some enemies. You are going to get some enemies, and you have to use the Spirit of

God to know when to and when not to. That was a Spirit-led moment for Bill, and he went up there, and the way you know it was a Spirit-led moment, it is called the way it turned out. If he went up there with an arrogant attitude, he would have been in a fist fight. Well, they would have been in a fist fight. I was getting the car and going to bring it up. If he went up there with an arrogant, proud attitude, we would have been killed, but he did not. He went up with a humble servant attitude, just like it was that Jesus Christ was his friend. It was an incredible moment in my life. Never forgot it. Never forgot it.

God takes His people's side and will never let the Hamans of this life hurt us, and learning how to trust God is real simple, folks. It is applying the principle of God that you know is true in a time of uncertainty. Haman had a plan to stop the people of God. People like you and me, when we deal with situations, people in life will form a plan to stop us. Haman put together an elaborate plan to kill Mordecai and even get rid of the Jews, and he is so sure of himself that his plan is going to work. He already goes out long before it comes to fruition and builds a gallows for him to get hung on. Then you know the story, he gets hung himself. God always takes those that want to hurt you in their own trap.

Let me give you another great verse in Romans 8:31:

Romans 8:31

What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

Now, let me show you three things here. One of the greatest study words in the Bible, if you ever want to study, is the word "net," N-E-T, not internet, but net, like catch a fish, like catch a bird, like net, not nut, that is your husband, net, N-E-T.

1. The wicked will and has set a snare for you to stop you if you are going to do what is right. We call it a setup. We already saw Mordecai do it, or Haman do it, to Mordecai. He lied against you. He slandered, half-truth, and then he went to work on putting the plan together. Psalms 140:5

The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords; they have spread a net by the wayside; they have set gins for me. Psalm 35:7

For without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul. Psalm 56:6

They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul. Psalm 10:7-9

7 His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue is mischief and vanity.

8 He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor.

9 He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor: he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net. Proverbs 29:5

A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet.

2. In spite of that, God will deliver you. Psalm 25:15

Mine eyes are ever toward the LORD; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net. Psalm

31:3-4

3 For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.

4 Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou art my strength. Psalm 22:4-5

4 Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.

5 They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. Psalm 18:16-19

16 He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters.

17 He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me.

18 They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay.

19 He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

3. God will take them in their own net. Psalm 10:1-2

1 Why standest thou afar off, O LORD? why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?

2 The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined. Psalm 57:6-7

6 They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves. Selah.

7 My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise. Psalm 9:15

The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken. Job 18:5-8

5 Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out, and the spark of his fire shall not shine.

6 The light shall be dark in his tabernacle, and his candle shall be put out with him.

7 The steps of his strength shall be straitened, and his own counsel shall cast him down.

8 For he is cast into a net by his own feet, and he walketh upon a snare.

What is going to happen? The first thing I want you to know is that the wicked, if you are going to take a stand for God, if you are going to be a Mordecai, if you are going to take God's side against God's enemies, saved or lost, if you are going to be a Mordecai, the first thing this book teaches is that you are going to pay a price, and they, the wicked, are going to set a net for you. They are going to lie about you, slander you, and use half-truths.

I am going to tell you something, even though they are going to set a trap for you, I want you to know this: God will always deliver you from it. The whole point of Esther is, even when you cannot see Him do it, there are going to be times in your life when you feel like you are all by yourself. There are going to be times in your life where you feel like you are just going to fold up and fall apart, and you are not going to be able to deal with it. This is where the Bible principles like these keep you. When you cannot see God at work, you know that He is simply because of the fact that He has given you the principles that tell you that He is.

You know the reality of my relationship with God, do you know what it is? The reality of my relationship with God is it does not matter how I feel about something. The emotional side of us is probably the hardest thing in our life to overcome. We have people who are diagnosed as bipolar. We have people who have severe emotional problems. The hardest problem, I would rather deal with 100 drug addicts and 5,000 drunks than people who are out of control with their emotions because the emotions are just like water. The Bible says in Proverbs 25:28:

Proverbs 25:28

He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.

That is your emotions. They are like a city broken down without walls. Emotional issues are like water. They just go everywhere. What we need, you know, you take 25 gallons of water and pour it out on the floor, and it makes a mess and it goes everywhere. But you take that same 25 gallons of water and pour it into an aquarium, and it is contained within that aquarium. Your emotions are like that water, and the aquarium is like the principles of the Word of God. They contain your emotions within a confine that does not let them go everywhere. They are called Bible principles. Bible principles.

I learned many, many years ago, it does not matter what I feel, what my feelings are about my situation. What matters is what I have learned about God and His promises and His principles. I deal with a lot of people who believe they can lose their salvation. They will say, "You know why people believe they can lose their salvation?" I am going to tell you why. Very simple. You know why people believe they can lose their salvation? Because they wake up someday or they go through some circumstance and they do not either respond to it or simply wake up some morning and do not feel saved. Now I am going to shock you with something. I am going to tell you something: there are days in my life when I do not feel saved. I mean, did you ever have the flu really bad and you are throwing up every fifteen minutes? Are you singing "Joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart"? Did you ever get so sick and so miserable to have some circumstance come into your life where you just wonder where in the world God is at? Did you ever second-guess yourself? Now the older you get, you do not second-guess yourself. But this is why people think they can lose their salvation. They think they are losing their salvation based on their feelings. "Well, I do not feel saved today." Salvation was never based on your feelings. Salvation is based on the clear principles of the Word of God, no matter what you feel about it. He simply said, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in thine heart that God has raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." End of it. It does not matter how you feel about it. You are going to have the best day in your life, "Oh, I am saved," and the worst day in your life, "Oh, I am not saved." That is feelings. You have got to get to the principles. The principles of the Word of God will keep you on the right line with the right emotions in check every time.

I will tell you something else. You will learn this as you go on in life. I have known preachers that preach places, and they want to win people to Christ, and they want to see people saved. If somebody does not come forward and get saved, they feel like they did not do well. They feel like that they failed. They feel like that, you know what the problem is with that? There again, it is their feelings. It is their feelings. Now I understand a great truth about my preaching or

anybody's preaching. You know what it is? The bottom line is I am not here to get anybody saved. I do not have the ability to get anybody saved. I am here for one reason this morning, and that is to preach the truth. Let God take care of the results. I do not put myself, I do not set myself up for that failure. I have had guys say, "Well, did you have a good service?" "Yeah, we had a great service. Had 25 people saved." "Well, praise the Lord. Did you have a great service?" "Yeah, we had a good service, but nobody got saved." Well, you know what? So what? Did you put out the truth? Did you give them what God told you to give them? But you see, that is an emotional thing based on the fact the principle says this. It says it over there in Isaiah 55:11:

Isaiah 55:11

So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

Now that is a principle to me. Every time I preach, every time you witness, when you put out the Word of God, you have a principle that you put in your pocket. No matter what you see the results are, the principle is God told you that if you put the Word out, that Word will not return void. I can live with that. I know whatever I do. I do not have to see the results. I do not see the results because I am not in charge of results. I am in charge of putting out the truth. I think many preachers need to get out of the business they are in of looking for results and just worry about preaching the truth. That is the reality of a relationship with God. It is built on the principle that you and I have. Now there are Bible principles that get you through life's trials when you cannot see God.

You know what he is saying? He is saying he sets a trap, and he gets the trap all ready for you. Then God comes in and turns the light out. He tries to walk out where he set the trap, gets caught in his own trap. God is going to be your advocate. God is going to be your advocate. There is an old Chinese proverb. A lot of God's people, they want to get revenge. They want to get even. They want this old Chinese proverb, and I am not much for old Chinese proverbs, but I like this one. It simply says, "If you wait by the river long enough, the body of your enemy will float by." You know why? Because God will always defend you. You do not have to defend yourself. I mean, you may have in a personal attack, you have to set straight, but you do not have to go out and get some crusade. You do not have to, God will deal with it. He just does not deal with it maybe in the time that we think He ought to deal with it.

VII. Joseph: An Illustration of God's Advocacy

Now I could give you many examples of this, but I have got to give you this one. Because this one illustrates exactly what we are talking about from another story in another book of the Bible. But it is an incredible story that lines up with this, that when you cannot see God and you are in a situation like Esther was, where they are out to get you and somebody is after you and they want to destroy you, that God, when you cannot see God and you cannot feel God, sometimes all you have is the promises that God gave you. But I am telling you, that is enough if you go to the book. Unfortunately, every time somebody says, "Come to me," and I say, "I am Bob, I am just having a tough time. I am just having a really tough time." And I said, "Well, how much, are you

attending any time?" And I am like, "Oh no, I cannot do that. I cannot stay focused. I cannot read. Every time I start reading, I just think about the problem." Well, there is your problem. I mean, that is like saying, "I have a terrible headache. Oh, it is killing me. And I have the medicine right over here. But oh, I just cannot, it hurts so bad that if I take the medicine, you know, I just cannot take the medicine." Do not be like the kid that kept hitting himself in the head with a hammer. And if somebody said, "Why do you do that?" The kid said, "Because it feels so good when I stop."

The story we are going to talk about here is a familiar one, but we are going to put it in a different context. We are going to slide it over into our study in Esther. All the print I gave you is found, the story is found, and you want to turn back here now, it is found throughout the first book of your Bible, Genesis 37 through Genesis 50. This story is going to be about Joseph and his brethren. I know of no other story that illustrates the great truth of Esther in such a graphic way that you can see it. So I have chosen to lay this out and tie it in here about God being your advocate and Him being there for you in the time of trouble when it does not look like it, like we are studying in Esther.

Now I want you to look at Genesis 37:3.

Genesis 37:3

Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours.

Let us get our little story straight here. Jacob, here in his story, is a picture of God the Father. Joseph is a picture of you and me. In the story of Joseph and the relationship he has with Jacob, it is a picture of the relationship you ought to have with God. The brethren are pictures of the brethren. They are in the family, but they have some issues. Here lies our story, and it just lays itself out so beautifully.

Now I am going to shock you with something today, and I know this is not popular teaching today, but you better get a handle on it pretty quickly if you are ever going to be successful and figure this thing out. Now I just sound totally contrary to what you have been taught all your life, but let me just bring you back to a reality here. God has favorites. Do you know that? God plays favoritism. Now that, you know, we live in a world where we think that God loves everybody. Of course, we know that is not true. Of course, there is a great white throne judgment where God is going to judge the unsaved dead. But God shows favoritism. You see in the Old Testament, He chose one nation out of all the other nations and gave them special blessings, special conditions, and everything for them, and let all the other nations just go do whatever they wanted to do. You know why? Because He has favorites.

In our story here, you have twelve brethren. You have these boys, and you have Joseph, and it is very clear that Joseph is the father's favorite. Now I want to say this to you: in your relationship of Christianity, I am just going to be honest with you, God shows favoritism to some of you more than He does the others. It is just the way it is. You say, "Well, no, no, no, no. Bible says that God is no respecter of persons." No, no, no, no. That is Acts 10. You better study the context. That is

dealing with salvation. God loves everybody through Christ, and in salvation, God is no respecter of persons. But when you got saved, ladies and gentlemen, you are no longer looked at through Christ. Now the Bible says you are in Christ, and that is a whole different ballgame.

Did you ever see it in the New Testament? Do any of you ever see the twelve apostles? They picture every church and every body of Christianity you are ever going to find anywhere. You have twelve men. First thing we see is one of them is a phony, Judas. You know what that tells me? That tells me everybody sitting here today, probably one or two are lost. You had one that went to church every Sunday with the twelve. He did everything he did, but he was a devil, the Bible says. And then out of the other twelve, you had three: Peter, James, and John. Peter, James, and John have been called the inner three. They see great and greater miracles. They experience greater things. They do greater things. When God does something like the Mount of Transfiguration, the rising of Jairus's daughter, those are the only three who are there. The rest of them are out doing something else. You know what that tells me? That tells me that some of you will have more power and see more and get more from God than the average Christian.

Now add to that, out of those three, there is only one that the Bible says that Jesus loved. Now I know that Jesus loved all of them. I have no problem with that. Well, why is it that Jesus, why is it that Jesus said about one of the twelve is the only one that He said Jesus loved, and that would be John? You know why that is? Because John, you know why Jesus had a special love for John? Because John had a special love for Jesus. This concept of God showing you favoritism is based on you loving God more than the person sitting next to you. When you read that passage down there, you will find the Bible clearly says that Joseph loved his father more than the others, so he got back more because of what he put into it.

I do not mean to offend you this morning, nor do I mean to make you upset, but be honest, some of you treat your dogs better than you treat God this morning. You will not let that pup go throughout the day without patting him on the head, scratching him on the ears, feeding him, rubbing his stomach when he rolls over, licks your hand, you pet him and all those things, and you go through your whole day and you do not say one thing to your Heavenly Father. I will tell you something else, some of you take better care of your lawns than you do the ministry of God. What a terrible thing to get to the judgment seat of Christ and find out you spent more on keeping the daffodils and the dandelions and the crabgrass out of your yard than you put into the ministry of Jesus Christ. If you ever want to find my house, if you are coming over for an appointment, you will not have any problem. If you come in springtime, mine will be the one with the crop of dandelions in it. If you come this time of year, it will be the crabgrass, look like barbed wire, I really like it.

Last spring some guy came over, drove up, you know, our neighbors get this ChemLawn stuff, this big truck comes up and sprays pure water on your yard and then charges you a lot of money for them. I mean, you walk right down my street, and all the yards absolutely look like they are just pristine. I mean, I tell you what, you see mine, it has just got a crop of dandelions in it. And a guy comes up and knocks on my door, and I said, "Yes sir." And he says, "Hey," he says, "for \$125 I can put you on a monthly program to take care of all those dandelions." And I said, "Why? I like those dandelions." And he says, "Well," he says, "it is kind of a distraction in the

neighborhood." I said, "Yeah, I know it is." And I said, "You are doing all these other people's lawns?" He says, "Yes I am." I said, "They all pay any money?" And they said, "Yes they are." I said, "Well, tell them something for me. Tell them I do not appreciate their dumping all their dandelions in my yard." Some of God's people take more care of their lawn than they do of God's ministry.

Well, if you invite me over, I have been invited over to people's homes before, you know, and I never say anything. Many times there is nothing to say. But I walk in there, you know, and if I come through some of God's people's homes in Kansas City, you would walk through an immaculate place where the furniture is all decorated right, the decor is perfect. There is not a thing out of place, much like my own house. Everything is exactly where it is at, and it is just beautiful. I mean, you have got this, you have got that, and it is just absolutely. You know what? You take care of your own house a lot better than you take care of God's house. That is where we are at. I am trying to show you why God loves some people more than He loved others in their relationship. It is because they loved Him.

God will not, now I know I am saved, God loves everybody on an equal distance, but I am telling you something. Once you get in Christ, God's love for you is based on your love for Him. You know you can be saved and be God's enemy, do not you? You know, you can be saved and God not speak to you at all. You do know that, do not you? I mean, this idea that we always throw around, "Well, I am not really quite in fellowship, nor am I quite out of fellowship," and just come where in limbo. No, no, no, that works in a Catholic church. That is called purgatory. But it does not work in Christianity. Sitting here this morning, you are either in or you are out. You are either in fellowship with Him walking hand in hand or you are out in the far country someplace, but it is one or the other. There is a process to stay in, but it is based on you loving Him enough that you want to stay in. Most of God's people do not love Him that much. You will call on God when you get in a jam, when your kid gets sick. You know, when you have some tragedy in your life, and I am telling you right now, you better get this thing because this story shows you. I showed you this last Thursday night, Leviticus, two parts: the way that God is through sacrifice and your walk with God is through sanctification. You better understand that this story lays this thing out.

Now, let us get to the real issue. The real issue here is found in Genesis 37:3. They do not like the coat their father gave him because they did not get a coat. Do you know why Joseph got a coat and the rest of them did not get a coat? Because God plays favorites. Do you know why some of you have a coat on this morning and some of you do not? Do you know what that coat of many colors represents? It represents the many blessings that God has put in young Joseph's life. It represents that Joseph was the father's favorite.

Genesis 37:4

And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

See how things work? That coat of many colors represents the favoritism toward Joseph because he loved the father more than the other brethren. Here is the root problem for him. When we talk

about the Hamans in your life who want the recognition and cannot get it, this is where the root problem comes for you and for me. See how simple it is? This is called Christian Psychology 101. Why do people hate you and slander you and set a net for you? Same reason the brethren did here: jealousy and envy.

I have watched this thing in action for over forty years. There are some of you sitting in here right now that somebody brought you to this church, and you were as goofy when you got here as you could ever hope to be. Goofy is good. It is all right. But what you did was as you began to grow, you began to put it together. You began to fall in love with your Bible. You began to fall in love with God. You basically did it by the numbers, and you were growing, and the very people who brought you here quit growing. You know what happened? Never would tell you this, would never tell you who it was. Happened so many times. I cannot even remember all of them. It got to a point that the person that brought you to church came in to sit down with me, to badmouth you, to tell me how bad and goofy you were. You know why? Because you were showing them up, and they were envious and jealous of it. That is why. You betcha. You betcha.

I have had just the reverse happen. I have had people bring people, I have had people come to the place where they bring people to this church, and they bring them in. As the people grow and continue to grow, the people that invited them in and the people that they brought in do not grow. They have come in and badmouthed the people that were in here that were doing the job simply because they get envious. Let me tell you something. This is a very real concept in Christianity, and you better get it down. If you are going to take your stand for God and you are going to pay the price, then you are going to pay it. Just like Whitefield did, Edwards did, Billy Sunday did, and J. Frank Norris did. What, are you something special?

Jealousy, we did not stop and think about this. You have people who rag on other Christians 24/7. You see them on Facebook. You see them on MyFace or Space or whatever the name of the place is. It is unbelievable. But if you know your Bible, you see how they portray themselves. Let me ask you a question. If, this simple question, if God is doing something in your life and using you and blessing you and turning the world upside down with you and ministry through you and changing people's lives, how in the world do you have time for all that negative stuff? I mean, why not list the people that God has used you to bring to church in Christ? Why not list the great thing God has showed you in the book this week? Why not list the great miracles in people's lives that God used you to intervene? If God is such a great God and He is doing such great things in your life now, how come every word out of your mouth is negative about some other Christian? I will tell you the answer that is found in Genesis 37: because he is not. The brother hated Joseph because he had the father's blessing, and they did not.

Now, let us go on with our story down here in Genesis 37:15-16. He goes to be with his brothers. This is not a good move. You might know that because in Genesis 37:18, they see him coming. They conspire against him to slay him. As Haman, as all wicked Christians who get jealous and get envious and do not want to do what is right and you will not give them the credibility when they are out of fellowship, they devise a plan to destroy him, to get rid of this kid. Now, you know the story. Genesis 37:19-21, they dig a pit. They get the idea that they are going to kill a lamb and dip this kid's blood in it, throw him down in a hole, go back to the father and say, "Hey,

a big bear got him. Here is his clothes in blood." But around Genesis 37:23 or 36, Judah intervenes. But instead, Judah says, "No, here come the Ishmaelites down here. They are a camel train heading down to Egypt. Let us sell him into slavery in Egypt, and then we will never see him again."

So in Genesis 37:23, the Holy Spirit of God takes very careful aim to tell you that they stripped Joseph of his coat. You see, that was the whole problem. This whole thing is over a stupid coat. This whole thing is over a stupid coat. That coat represents the multiple blessings in his life that God had given him because of the relationship of love that he had with Him and Him with the father, and the brethren did not like it. I think that is very instructive that it says, "and they stripped him of his coat." They hated that coat. Then they go back and tell the father the bad news while secretly they are high-fiving. They are behind the thing saying, "Oh, we got him. Yes, no more Joseph. Ding dong, which is dead." They are high-fiving. Remember now, the Bible said in Genesis 37:23, they stripped him of his coat.

Oh my dear friend, I am going to tell you something. There is one who will always stand up for you even when you cannot see Him. There is one who will, when you are in the right, there is one who will take your side, who will be your advocate as in the book of Esther, as in here, Christ our advocate. Then our story turned into Egypt. Now I have got to be honest with you. I am sure that Joseph was wondering what in the world was going wrong. I am sure he second-guessed himself. You know, one of the great things about the Bible that shows you a lot of people that had those things, you know, Noah took 120 years to build that ark. You know that I bet you that 120 years Noah doubted himself many, many times. You know, Noah is the only man in the Bible, and why he is such a great picture. Noah is a picture of our walk with God. You know why he is such a great picture? Because Noah is the only man I know of in the Bible who stands absolutely alone against the world with what God told him to do. You put that into a human frame, time frame of you and me. Do you think he did not second-guess himself? Do you think that the fact that the people are going by on Saturday night honking a horn because he is building a 300-foot boat in the back of his yard going up higher every day, and he is going around telling people it is going to rain when nobody knows what rain is? But he is telling people God's judgment is going to fall when there is a church on every street corner. Everybody is talking about loving God. It is just nobody wants anything to do with God. It is a wicked world. You know what? He did not have a Bible back then. All he had was what God told him to hear. As far as we know, God never said anything to him for another 120 years. But you know, that was a rough one to get through. How about fifty years into that thing, man, you would be saying, "Is that what he really said? Maybe he said rowboat and I missed it."

John the Baptist had a tough time. Did you ever read his passage over there when he gets thrown in jail? He thinks the Lord is coming. He is coming. He is told to go out and preach the coming of the Lord, and God is going to deliver everybody. He winds up in the hoosegow. I guarantee you he second-guessed himself. Thomas second-guessed himself. All the apostles did except John. Why? They are all scattered like billiards on a billiard table. They are gone everywhere. Even afterwards, Thomas said, after he heard Christ say, "I am going to destroy this temple and raise it up in three days," Thomas said, "Step back, put my hand in your side and see the nail

scars in your hand." He doubted it. Hence, doubting Thomas. We all have those times, do not we? John did not have them, but we all do. I am sure Joseph wondered what he had done. I am sure he second-guessed himself, but all along God has a bigger plan. He just does not always tell us what that plan is. Sometimes He leaves us hanging out there because we ought to know by the principles that God will always take care of us.

Genesis 39:1-5

1 And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither.

2 And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

3 And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.

4 And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.

5 And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.

You see, it does not matter what the circumstances are in life. It does not matter that, "Oh, I am sorry. I thought they, I thought they stripped him of that coat. I probably just got the top half of the coat. Maybe it had a lining in it and he unzipped it and gave him that." I thought they took his coat of blessings. Nobody is going to strip you of the blessings of God. Nobody. But you see, when you are in that thing all by yourself, sometimes you think it is going to happen or it could happen or it is going to happen or God will let it happen. No, He will not. He is your advocate. He is your advocate. Here is a situation where behind the scene they said, "We are renovating, we threw him down in Egypt." And God is behind the scene here just like in Esther, orchestrating the events. The blessings of God cannot be taken away in your life, my life, by anybody.

Then we know what happens in Genesis 39. It had not done yet down around verse 7. Potiphar's wife, what a sweetie she is. She lies about him trying to have an affair with her, and she lies about him and gets him all more consternation and all kinds of problems. I have always looked at that because the guy should have had him killed, but he did not have him killed. He threw him down in jail. You know what that tells me? That guy probably had an idea of who his wife really was. So instead of reacting by the hand of God, he puts him down in jail, and then we see God go to work down there. You know what you get out of this? It does not matter what situation you find yourself in. It does not matter who lies about you. It does not matter how they disgrace you. It does not matter anything at all, what they do. When God's hand is in your life, it is over, boys. God's hand is in your life, and He works him through this thing and brings him around, and you know what happened? By the time we get to Genesis 41:43, He has elevated him so much and

brought him up to the place where Joseph now rides second chariot in the kingdom. He is the number two man under Pharaoh, and they stripped him of his coat. Yeah, right.

Now we do not want to miss this. God is setting the scene in Egypt and elevating him to the place where He gets him, and He keeps working behind the scenes and brings him right up the ladder in the midst of the worst adversity that anybody could ever imagine themselves to be in. First, sold into slavery by your own brothers. Second, thrown down there in Egypt. Third, some woman lies about you, and you wind up in jail. Then Joseph is saying, "What in the world is going on?" And then God behind the scene bringing him up to the one day he walks out, and everything in Egypt is under his hand. But back home where the conspirators are, a famine hits. God is setting the scene in Egypt. Boy, they are paying a price back home. A famine hits. As Dr. Phil would say, "How is all this working for you?"

Let me tell you something, the quickest way to get a famine in your life is to attack a child of God because he or she is doing right and right or not. I had a friend of mine that went to a church, and this church at one time was running a lot of people. There were some problems there, and this guy that I know is a friend of mine, he basically, some things happened through no fault of his own, and he just, it needed to be taken care of. It did not get taken care of, and the thing just went and went and went and went, and after a while, because the pastor is pretty spineless and he does not have any ability to lead and he does not really know what he is doing, he comes to the point like all guys like this, he starts to blame the problem that the church has on the people. Now let me tell you something. On a large scale across this church, any problem this church has will not be because of any one person or a group of people. It will always come back to me because everything rises and falls on leadership. That is what you have to assume.

Now I have two choices when a problem arises. I can deal with it or not deal with it, but either way, it is my responsibility, and this guy could not deal with it. After a period of time, he started blaming the problems on everybody else, and particularly this guy. So it comes to the point where, and I have got to tell you, I talked to this guy at great length and on the phone, and he struggled with a lot of things, and there was no more loyal guy in anybody's church than this guy was to this pastor. I am just telling you up front. But because of this pastor's inability to be able to deal with it, he comes to the point where he brings this thing out, and he finally just, the whole thing blows up. Now his church is, you could call, a roll call in a phone booth on Sunday morning. You know why? Because when you attack God's people who are trying to do what is right, you are sure to get a famine in your life. It is just that simple. It is just that simple. When you get to the place in your life that you are thanking God, you know, for you do not have any men's ministries, you do not have anybody getting saved, and all you have got to do is get up every morning and thank God, "But we have got a real sweet spirit here this morning," you are in trouble. You get a sweet spirit at an old folks' home. You get a sweet spirit at a funeral with a guy saved. What is that?

Finally, the end of our story. Not the end of the message, but the end of the story. I saw that smile of relief on your face. God uses the famine to get to the very boys who sold him into slavery to have them come to Joseph to get the food. That is an incredible deal. You know, there are guys out there who hate my guts, who if you ran into them, they would not have anything good to say

about me, but every Monday morning they are on the internet finding out what I am teaching, what I am preaching so they can get something preaching their church next week. Ain't that right, Sammy? It is your alias. It is your alias. I think that is, you know what, I am telling you, the principles are true.

In time, Joseph reveals himself, and how you want to see that. God's man never seeks revenge. He is not angry. He does not write about it on his Facebook or MySpace. He does not go out and slander, and he could have killed them. He could have had them in jail, had their heads cut off, but he does not. He forgives them and reveals himself to them as his long-lost brothers. By doing that, he sets up one of the greatest principles for you and for me when we go through the things that we go through and we cannot see God's hand in it like in the book of Esther. It is a great principle.

Genesis 45:5-7

5 Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.

6 For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest.

7 And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

You know what he does? Joseph had every right to kill them, take his revenge through the whole thing that threw him in jail. But a real Christian never does that. Joseph sees the bigger picture. He sees and has learned that God was always doing something on a larger scale and that God was in charge even when I am sure in his life it was total confusion. The principle is simply this: God never lost sight of Joseph. God never lost sight of Joseph. Do you believe that? An amen would be appropriate at this point. Do you believe that? God never lost sight of Joseph. But you know what the other side of that thing is? Joseph never lost sight of God. That is the key. That is the key. That is the key.

VIII. Conclusion: Never Doubt in the Darkness

Understanding this story in the book of Esther helps us see in tough times it is what God promised that gets us through. He said He would never leave us nor forsake us in the book of Hebrews. I am going to give you one last verse here and keep this close to your heart because it is a great verse. It is the verse that will put a perspective in things that you go through if you are ever going to serve God and really minister for Him. Because you are going to have your Hamans and you are going to have your brethren. The Haman represents unsaved people. The twelve brethren represent saved people if you want to put it into that. We did not get into that. That is another whole thing, but that is what you have got. You are simply all your life, if you are going to serve God. Maybe all of you will just, most of you will walk the middle line all your life, and ten years from now you will try to get along with everybody like you do now. You have no enemies. Nobody is out to get you. You just want, you are so afraid somebody is going to say

something bad about you. So you just walk that nervous little, I call it the Don Knotts walk. You are Don Knotts.

Genesis 50:20

But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

That, my friend, will be the summation or should be the summation of all the Hamans and all the brethren in your life and my life. The ending says in Genesis 50:20, "to save much people alive." God wants to save much people through your life, and not only just through your life. Many times we think that God just wants to save people through our life, but that is not true. God not only wants to save people through your life, but He wants to save people through the circumstances you go through in life. Just like Mordecai had his Haman and Joseph had his brothers, you will have those who have one purpose: will be negative in your life. Everything they do, everything that they say will be simply because of the fact that the coat that you wear that God has given you, that whatever you touch turns to gold, and whatever they touch turned to iron. The blessings of God can never be taken away. Many times we give them up because of our fear, but greater is He that is in the world, and who can be against us if God be for us? But you remember God is your advocate. He will defend you with the blessings of life and your coat of many colors. He will keep you in prosperity and a ministry and life while they go through the famines of Egypt. God is your advocate.

Old Melchizedek told me something one time years and years ago, and I have never forgotten it. It was one of those wisdom things that a guy that goes through a lot in life picks up. I was just a young guy in life, and that is the blessings of it because older guys always have wisdom that they learn that they can give the younger guys. Many younger guys do not learn that, but I was smart enough to know that this old boy had been through some things. I will tell you what, through many of the trials of my own life and many things that I had to go through in my life in ministry, this thing has been one sustaining thing that he told me. It is not a verse in the Bible, but it is a concept based on the principles of the Bible that we have talked about today. Remember God was behind the scenes in Esther. Mordecai wanted to destroy what God was doing. No mention of God anywhere, but God is always behind the scenes. That translates that when you go through a tough time, when you cannot see God, know that He is there. Then Joseph sold into Egypt by his brethren, thrown in a pit, down into Egypt. All the travesties of injustices that were done. But you know what? At the end of the day, God sustained him because God is our advocate.

Which brings us back to this incredible piece of wisdom that was given to me so many, many years ago. It is simply this: Never, never doubt in the darkness what God has given you in the light. Never doubt in the darkness what God has given you in the light.

Let us pray. Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We do love You. We thank You for this great book that stands alone because, Lord, we know that if we are going to stand for God, we will have to stand alone. Lord, I love these people, and I would give my life to them and teach them everything I know. But Lord, that is beside the point. So many pastors get caught up in the fact that they forget that at the end of the day, it is still me and You. I have seen family

leave people. I have seen friends leave them, over the stupidest stuff in the whole wide world. But you know what, Lord? You will never leave me. And You will always be my advocate. As You will these dear people here. But teach us to learn the principles of God. The containment of our emotions, our feelings, and our very life contained in the principles of the Word of God that show us that when we do not think You are there, You are there. That You are always behind the scenes in our life, Christ our advocate. Father, we will be thankful and praise You and bless the rest of the events of this day and throughout the week and all the things that go on and bless the people in Wichita and the folks that, Lord, are maybe traveling today. We just love You and thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen. God bless you. You are dismissed.