

BUILD-A-BELIEVER WORKSHOPS

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People say to me, "How do you build a church?" You don't build a church, you build a believer. As a result, the church will build itself. (John MacArthur).

Esther

Chapter 9:1-16

“God-fearin’ ”

Introduction

God-fearing, or the more biblical statement, [the fear of God](#), is a complex topic. It certainly describes something positive and uplifting for believers in a relationship with God as their Father. But it also suggests a certain terror for those who have rejected the Lord, are in rebellion against Him, and will therefore meet Him one day as their Judge.

Some practical aspects of God-fearing are illustrated for us in our text. In these opening verses of Esther chapter nine we see a population fall under the fear of God because God's people are God-fearing. It's a condition that would benefit any country or city or situation. As believers, we want to be the God-fearing people who cause unbelievers to fear – and therefore seek after – our Heavenly Father.

We'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 You Should Strike Fear In The Hearts Of Unbelievers, and #2 You Should Fear Striking At The Heart Of God.

#1 You Should Strike Fear In The Hearts Of Unbelievers (v1-5)

A decree was in effect that allowed Persians on a certain date to annihilate any and all Jews in the empire and plunder their property. The properly signed and executed decree of a Persian monarch could not be rescinded or revoked. But it could be countered by another decree.

After discovering Queen Esther was, in fact, a Jew, King Ahasuerus gave her uncle, Mordecai, the authority to issue a counter decree. The second decree allowed the Jews, on the same date, to gather and defend themselves against their aggressors; and to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the forces of any people or province that would assault them, both little children and women, and to plunder their possessions (Esther 8:11).

The day arrived. Its chief feature, as described in these first five verses, was the fear that fell upon the unbelieving Persians. Mordecai in particular; and the Jews in general; struck fear in the hearts of the unbelievers.

It's a picture for us. Mordecai is a type of Jesus Christ; the Jews are a type of the believer. There is a sense in which we, as believers, should strike fear in the hearts of those who do not know our Lord.

Let's see exactly what that means by identifying some of the characteristics of Mordecai and the Jews.

Esther 9:1 Now in the twelfth month, that is, the month of Adar, on the thirteenth day, the time came for the king's command and his decree to be executed. On the day that the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, the opposite occurred, in that the Jews themselves overpowered those who hated them.

The first thing we might note is that the Jews understood they were involved in a serious conflict. On a certain day, their enemies would attack them – seeking to annihilate them and plunder them.

Christians are involved in a serious conflict. The world, the flesh, and the devil form a kind of Axis of Evil that want to annihilate and plunder you. Not on a certain day, but everyday!

The battleground is anywhere and everywhere you find yourself – even in the Church.

If you do not prepare for battle everyday, you risk being plundered. When things are going well, there are strategies being planned against you behind the scenes. Take advantage of the calm to spiritually resupply yourself.

If you do not understand there is a battle everyday, you will be drawn into fighting it with the wrong weapons. You will try to meet anger with anger, strife with strife, instead of walking in the fruit of God's indwelling Holy Spirit.

Esther 9:2 The Jews gathered together in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to lay hands on those who sought their harm. And no one could withstand them, because fear of them fell upon all people.

The Jews were no doubt stronger in numbers than they were separately. Still, even gathered together, they were greatly outnumbered. It wasn't their numbers. There was a power in their gatherings that struck fear into the hearts of their enemies.

When we gather together, it can be something powerful. The Lord Jesus promises to be among us when we gather. He surrounds us with His strength. Many of you were saved in a gathering of God's people. I'd say that was power! Most of you, after being saved, have experienced some word from God, or some touch in your life as you've gathered with other believers. Power!

We should look forward, with expectation, to gathering together. We can't be at every meeting, or meet every day. But we ought to want to, because we're not just meeting with one another; we're meeting with Jesus Christ.

- being changed to bring change -

Speaking of our Lord: Mordecai is a type of Him.

Esther 9:3 And all the officials of the provinces, the satraps, the governors, and all those doing the king's work, helped the Jews, because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them.

Esther 9:4 For Mordecai was great in the king's palace, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces; for this man Mordecai became increasingly prominent.

This doesn't mean that we will always have favor with those in authority; or that we won't experience trouble in our walk. As a type, Mordecai teaches us the following:

1. Although others are in authority over us, Jesus Christ is the ultimate authority. We may not see it, but secular authorities

- are doing the king's work. Just as God was working behind the scenes in Persia, so in the world today – and in your world – He causes all things to work together for good for them that love Him.
2. Just as Mordecai's fame spread, so the knowledge of Jesus Christ has been and is being spread to the whole world as Christians take the Gospel with them wherever they go.
 3. And just as Mordecai became increasingly prominent, there is coming a time when Jesus will become increasingly prominent until, at His Second Coming, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:11).

Esther 9:5 Thus the Jews defeated all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, with slaughter and destruction, and did what they pleased with those who hated them.

We should read this with the last verse of Chapter Eight:

Esther 8:17 And in every province and city, wherever the king's command and decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a holiday. Then many of the people of the land became Jews, because fear of the Jews fell upon them.

Put those two verses together and you have a complete picture. Some were saved by believing; some would perish in their unbelief. Striking fear in the hearts of unbelievers can be a sweet savor to some; but it will be the smell of death to others.

Something important to note in verse five is the mention of the stroke of the sword. It was the skillful wielding of the sword that defeated their enemies.

So it is for us. If we are to strike fear in the hearts of unbelievers, hoping some will be saved, then we must defeat our enemies with skillful strokes of the sword, which for us is the Word of God.

The enemies we're talking about are not your spouse, or your boss, or your government. They are the world and the flesh and the devil.

The Word of God must remain prominent – especially in our gatherings. It must remain our priority. We must handle it skillfully –

such as by reading it and then studying it verse-by-verse, chapter-by-chapter.

You are to strike fear in the hearts of unbelievers. You will if you understand you are engaged in daily spiritual warfare; if you are committed to gathering together with the Church; and if we skillfully handle God's Word. But most importantly, you will strike fear in the hearts of unbelievers to the extent you expect our Lord and King to be among us and remember that He is already enthroned high above all other principalities and powers.

There's something else, something more personal, about God-fearing.

#2 You Should Fear Striking At The Heart Of God (v6-16)

I want you to be alert for something as we overview these verses; then we'll return to it and talk about it. I'm confident you'll see it as we read through them.

Esther 9:6 And in Shushan the citadel the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men.

Esther 9:7 Also Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha,

Esther 9:8 Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha,

Esther 9:9 Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vajezatha -

Esther 9:10 the ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews - they killed; but they did not lay a hand on the plunder.

Esther 9:11 On that day the number of those who were killed in Shushan the citadel was brought to the king.

Esther 9:12 And the king said to Queen Esther, "The Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the citadel, and the ten sons of Haman. What have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? Now what *is* your petition? It shall be granted to you. Or what *is* your further request? It shall be done."

Esther 9:13 Then Esther said, "If it pleases the king, let it be granted to the Jews who *are* in Shushan to do again tomorrow according to today's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged on the gallows."

Esther 9:14 So the king commanded this to be done; the decree was issued in Shushan, and they hanged Haman's ten sons.

Gentle Queen Esther calls for the already dead bodies of Haman's ten sons to be hanged publicly; and for an additional day of fighting against the enemies of the Jews. *Don't mess with Esther!*

It is to remind us how harshly **we** must deal with **our** spiritual enemies. We must be brutal and unyielding in the skillful application of the sword of the Spirit – the Word of God. We can give no place to, show no mercy towards, the world, the flesh, or the devil.

Esther 9:15 And the Jews who *were* in Shushan gathered together again on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and killed three hundred men at Shushan; but they did not lay a hand on the plunder.

Esther 9:16 The remainder of the Jews in the king's provinces gathered together and protected their lives, had rest from their enemies, and killed seventy-five thousand of their enemies; but they did not lay a hand on the plunder.

God's people were victorious. Not only were there lives spared, but many Persians were saved. Sadly, many Persians also perished. But not without warning; not without opportunity to know and fear the Lord.

If you are a Christian, you walk and war from the place of victory. Jesus has already defeated your enemies on the Cross. He's left us here, for now, because He is longsuffering, not willing that any should perish. We fight the good fight so others can know Him and be saved. If we must suffer along the way, it is part of our walk and warfare that He will use for our good and His glory.

I asked you to notice something in these verses. Did you? It's the repetition of a phrase. Three times (which is a lot in just eleven verses) you're told **they did not lay a hand on the plunder**.

The decree allowed them to plunder their enemies; but they adamantly refused. It causes you to pause and wonder, "Why?"

To answer "Why?" we need a quick refresher in Jewish history. Back in the days of Saul, Israel's first king, they were at war with the Amalekites. God's battle plan was revealed in First Samuel 15:3,

1 Samuel 15:3 Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have,

and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.”

God gave King Saul and his forces a mighty victory. But Saul disobeyed God’s command:

1 Samuel 15:7 And Saul attacked the Amalekites, from Havilah all the way to Shur, which is east of Egypt.

1 Samuel 15:8 He also took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.

1 Samuel 15:9 But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all *that was* good, and were unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.

What you want to notice is that **Agag** was the Amalekite king. The wicked villain of the Book of Esther was Haman. He’s the one who wanted all the Jews annihilated. Haman is no less than five-times called, **Haman the Agagite**. Although some scholars disagree, most scholars and strong Jewish tradition say that Haman the Agagite was a descendant of Agag the Amalekite king.

If King Saul had obeyed God earlier in Jewish history, there would not have been a Haman the Agagite to unleash the Persian anti-Semitism!

Saul had blundered by keeping Agag alive and by plundering the Amalekites. If the Jews in Esther’s time felt they were finishing the work originally given to Saul, then you can easily see why they would refuse the plunder. **They didn’t want to make the plunder-blunder!**

When Saul disobeyed God, the prophet Samuel rebuked him with strong words. He called what Saul had done **rebellion** and **stubbornness** (First Samuel 15:23). The Jews in Esther’s time were not about to make the same error a second time. It’s why they were careful to kill all the sons of Haman; and it’s why they refused the plunder.

The words **rebellion** and **stubbornness** remind me of raising children. As a rebellious and stubborn child, Saul had struck at the heart of his

Heavenly Father. Since God is our Father: When we rebel and are stubborn, we, too, strike at His father's heart.

Our fear of God is not that He will discipline us; though He will when necessary for our good. It is not that He will unleash trials and tragedies upon us; though in the world we will have trials and tribulations.

Our fear of God is that, since He is our loving Heavenly Father, our disobedience is a rebellion and a stubbornness that will wound Him.

All parents know what I'm talking about. *Parenting is heart-work!*
The disobedience of your children strikes at your heart and causes an almost indescribable pain.

Think of God as your Father and you will fear striking at His heart. You will obey His Word for His sake – often against your own will and wants, but always for your good and His glory.



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