

# **BUILD-A-BELIEVER WORKSHOPS**

## **Ezra Nehemiah Esther**

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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 9:17 – 10:3

### *“Victor Victorious”*

#### Introduction

The agonized athlete was a Slovene ski-jumper by the name of Vinko Bogataj. It was the World Ski Jumping Championships in 1970. Midway through his third run, Bogataj felt he was going too fast and tried to slow down. Unfortunately, he lost his balance and tumbled spectacularly over the side of the ramp. Bogataj suffered only a concussion, though it looked far worse.

He's the guy made famous in the opening of ABC's long-running series, *Wide World of Sports*. Some of you are old enough, or pop-cultured enough, to remember it. As the announcer opened the program each week he would mention "the thrill of victory... and the agony of defeat." Vinko Bogataj's failed jump defined "the agony of defeat" for a generation of sports enthusiasts.

"The thrill of victory... and the agony of defeat" is a phrase that can sometimes define your life as a Christian. You're told in the Bible that you have victory over the world (First John 5:4), the flesh (Galatians 5:16), and the devil (James 4:7); over death, sin, and the Law (First Corinthians 15:54-56).

We are the victors; we are victorious. Yet we often experience the agony of spiritual defeat.

I want to talk a little about preserving our victory. Our text in Esther gives us some principles about preserving victory. The Jews had just defeated their enemies in Persia. They were the victors. In the

aftermath of their stunning victory, they did two things to help remain victorious:

1. They **celebrated** their victory.
2. They **commemorated** their victory.

We can apply those same two strategies in our own lives – both individually as Christians and corporately as a Church.

We'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 Look For Ways To Celebrate Your Victory, and #2 Live In Ways That Commemorate Your Victory.

### #1 Look For Ways To Celebrate Your Victory (9:17-19)

Celebrations normally follow victory. Sticking with the world of sports, we've all seen images of celebrations by the fans and fanatics of the winning team. (It's sad that they have gotten so violent and destructive). After a short while, the celebrations die down, and then folks get back to their normal routine. All that's left of their victory celebration is a t-shirt or a hat with their team's logo.

We need to change our way of thinking regarding Christian victory. It's not something we achieve once in a while, then celebrate for a short time – only to return to our normal routine with nothing more than a Christian t-shirt or hat.

Spiritual victory, as I understand it, is ours all the time to either believe or ignore. The apostle Paul wrote,

[2 Corinthians 2:14](#) Now thanks *be* to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ...

The word [triumph](#) is a reference to a Roman parade called the Triumph. It was a grand processional that celebrated a general's total and complete victory over the enemy.

Here is my thought: If I can have victory all the time, and celebration follows victory, **then I ought to be celebrating all the time!**

The Jews won a stunning and complete victory over their enemies in the Persian Empire. They celebrated it. The ways they *temporarily* celebrated their victory are ways we can *permanently* celebrate our victory.

A decree had been issued by wicked Haman calling upon Persians to rise-up and annihilate all the Jews. After a dramatic scene in the palace, where Queen Esther revealed to King Ahasuerus that she was a Jew, a second decree had been issued. It allowed the Jews to defend themselves and rise-up against any of their Persian oppressors. After two days of fighting, the Jews were completely victorious.

The first thing they did was rest:

*Esther 9:17 This was on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar. And on the fourteenth of the month they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness.*

They rested physically on a particular day. We are to rest spiritually every day. It is a reminder to us that all of the work of defeating our enemies has already been accomplished by Jesus. Our part is to walk by faith, resting in Him.

- being changed to bring change -

Too many Christians fail to remain victorious because they are always concerned about what they must do for God, rather than knowing what God has done for them. You set yourself up to be defeated if everything depends upon you.

The next thing the Jews did was feast with gladness:

*Esther 9:17 This was on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar. And on the fourteenth of the month they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness.*

*Esther 9:18 But the Jews who were at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth day, as well as on the fourteenth; and on the fifteenth of the month they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness.*

*Esther 9:19 Therefore the Jews of the villages who dwelt in the unwalled towns celebrated the fourteenth day of the month of Adar with gladness and feasting, as a holiday, and for sending presents to one another.*

The Jews in Shushan had been granted an extra day to attack their enemies, delaying their celebrating by one day. Nevertheless, all the Jews, both in the city and in the country, enjoyed a day of [feasting and gladness](#).

God wants to spread out before us, each day, a glad feast; or a feast that will make us glad. It's a spiritual feast and it begins with taking-in the Word of God. Read the Word. And read it from the perspective that God is revealing Himself to you in and through it.

The next thing the Jews did was treat the day as a [holiday](#); the word is mentioned in verse nineteen. The word [holiday](#) is two words in the Hebrew, *good* and *day*. It was a 'good day' because things had worked out for good. It reminds me of the fact that all things work together for the good for them that love God. It's not positive thinking; it's prophetic thinking – knowing the ultimate outcome.

I celebrate each day as another in the long providence of God that – although I may not understand it – is working together for my good and His glory.

The next thing the Jews did was [send presents to one another](#) (verse nineteen). They gave gifts to each other.

God has given you gifts by His Holy Spirit Who indwells you. They are not for you; they are for others. They are to minister to others. Discover them; use them. If you've quit using them, then get stirred-up and start using them.

Here's a clue: Just hang around other believers, with a desire to help them, and you will find yourself using the gifts God has given you.

You can celebrate your victory all the time, everyday, if you are resting in God, feasting on God's Word, looking to your future hope, and looking for ways to exercise your spiritual gifts to benefit others.  
**It's so simple that we don't always do it!**

#2 Live In Ways That  
Commemorate Your Victory  
(9:20-10:3)

Mordecai and Esther knew that the thrill of victory would quickly begin to fade. So they combined to think of a way to commemorate the victory. They established, on an annual basis, the Feast of Purim.

For us, the key principle in this section is found in verse twenty-three:

Esther 9:23 So the Jews **accepted** the custom which they had begun, as Mordecai had written to them,

The word **accepted** is a poor translation. Let me give you a better reading of the verse from the good 'ole KJV:

Esther 9:23 And the Jews **undertook** to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written unto them;

They **undertook** to do something that would commemorate their victory. It was a great undertaking, involving thought and planning and foresight.

The Christian life is a great undertaking. If we give it some thought... Some planning... Some foresight... Then we will commemorate our victory on a daily basis.

Esther 9:20 And Mordecai wrote these things and sent letters to all the Jews, near and far, who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, Esther 9:21 to establish among them that they should celebrate yearly the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar, Esther 9:22 as the days on which the Jews had rest from their enemies, as the month which was turned from sorrow to joy for them, and from mourning to a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and joy, of sending presents to one another and gifts to the poor.

These were things they had already been doing. Once a year, they would do them again to commemorate their victory.

We commemorate our victory by continuing to do the things we should already be doing. Prayer; reading the Word; fellowshiping with believers; telling others about Jesus; those are the things we should already be doing, and continue doing, until the Lord returns.

Esther 9:23 So the Jews accepted the custom which they had begun, as Mordecai had written to them,

Esther 9:24 because Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to annihilate them, and had cast Pur (that *is*, the lot), to consume them and destroy them;

Esther 9:25 but when *Esther* came before the king, he commanded by letter that this wicked plot which *Haman* had devised against the Jews should return on his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.

Esther 9:26 So they called these days Purim, after the name Pur. Therefore, because of all the words of this letter, what they had seen concerning this matter, and what had happened to them,

The Jews still celebrate Purim today. Like all celebrations, customs and traditions surrounding it have changed over the centuries. I do want to share one of the more modern customs.

The children dress up as the characters found in the story of Esther. The Book of Esther is read aloud as it is acted out in a play or acted out with puppets. Every time the name of Haman is mentioned, everyone boos, hisses, and stamps their feet. There are even special noisemakers, called *groggers*. When the name Mordecai is mentioned, the people cheer.

You probably have a tradition like that at home. Ever been watching TV and something weird come on? *You cover your eyes and start making noise until someone can change the channel!*

Esther 9:27 the Jews established and imposed it upon themselves and their descendants and all who would join them, that without fail they should celebrate these two days every year, according to the written *instructions* and according to the *prescribed* time,

Esther 9:28 *that* these days *should be* remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city, that these days of Purim should not fail *to be observed* among the Jews, and *that* the memory of them should not perish among their descendants.

I like the wording, *imposed it upon themselves*. We would say we discipline ourselves. Discipline is a part of the victorious Christian life. We impose discipline upon ourselves, knowing that our spirit is willing but our flesh is weak.

They also imposed it upon their *descendants*. Parents: It's your joyous privilege to share Jesus Christ with your children.

They also imposed it upon all those [who would join them](#). This doesn't mean we try to force others to become believers. But we ought to take advantage of every opening and opportunity to share Christ with others.

[Esther 9:29](#) Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter about Purim.

[Esther 9:30](#) And *Mordecai* sent letters to all the Jews, to the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, *with* words of peace and truth,

[Esther 9:31](#) to confirm these days of Purim at their *appointed* time, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had prescribed for them, and as they had decreed for themselves and their descendants concerning matters of their fasting and lamenting.

[Esther 9:32](#) So the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim, and it was written in the book.

This feast was not prescribed by God. It was wholly the invention of Mordecai and Esther. It is in the category of a tradition of man.

Traditions are not wrong in-and-of themselves. They can be a great aid in passing on our faith to the next generation. It is when tradition becomes traditionalism that we get into problems. One theologian said, "*Tradition is the living faith of the dead; traditionalism is the dead faith of the living.*"

For us, it means we should desire to establish certain days and events to honor the Lord. But we must constantly be seeking God's leading to alter or even cancel them if they become traditionalism.

The three verses of Chapter Ten produce a snap-shot of a believer who is both celebrating and commemorating his victory.

[Esther 10:1](#) And King Ahasuerus imposed tribute on the land and *on* the islands of the sea.

Why mention the king's taxation program? Some Bible students think that it was Mordecai who engineered this new system of tribute to replace the former system of war and plunder.

Whoever imposed it, Mordecai was part of it:

Esther 10:2 Now all the acts of his power and his might, and the account of the greatness of Mordecai, to which the king advanced him, *are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia?*

Esther 10:3 For Mordecai the Jew *was second to King Ahasuerus, and was great among the Jews and well received by the multitude of his brethren, seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to all his countrymen.*

In this snap-shot of Mordecai's victory we can identify a few things:

1. First, he was **advanced** by the **king** to a position of being **second** in the kingdom. He did not promote himself. **Don't seek to promote yourself.** Learn instead to be content right where you are. Victory isn't waiting for you once you get ahead; it is yours to discover right now, right where you live.
2. Next, Mordecai was **second to the king**. *So are we!* Jesus reigns over our lives. We are second and subordinate. Victory eludes us when we consider our lives more of a democracy, where we have a say as well as Jesus. Let Him decide what is best for you.
3. The third thing we note is that Mordecai worked tirelessly **seeking the good of his people and speaking peace** to them. His actions and activities were selfless and serving. His speech was gracious and encouraging. Your work and your words are a kind of gauge as to your sense of victory. Serve selflessly, speaking graciously, and you are commemorating your victory in Jesus.

Applying God's Word...

Let's suppose there were such a thing as spiritual photography, by which the true condition of our lives could be captured. What if a spiritual photographer took a snap-shot of your life right now? What would you be wearing? What would be in the background? What would be your expression? What impression would the photo give others?

If you are not a believer... Jesus Christ has defeated sin, death, and Hell by dying on the cross and rising from the dead. These are enemies you cannot hope to defeat yourself. You cannot be victorious against them. **Come to the Lord!**

