

Season 3, Episode 8: God's People Rise (Chapter 8)

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Sarah: This podcast is sponsored by 10offthose.com 10offthose.com hand pick the best Christian books that point to Jesus and sell them at discounted prices. Finding hope under Bethlehem Skies by Robin Ham is an advent devotional journey through the Book of Ruth, helping us to see the magnitude of God's promises for a saviour in the darkest of places. I don't know about you, but I always find it hard to commit to reading an advent devotion daily. But I also find that if I actually start reading it in November, I'm much more likely to keep going with it until Christmas. Why not go and grab your coffee now and soak up these wonderful reflections preempting the busyness of the Christmas season.

Felicity: Hello, everyone. Welcome to two sisters in the cup of tea My name is Felicity and I live in America. And this is my sister Sarah. She lives in the UK.

Sarah: Hi, everyone. What's in your city?

Felicity: Well, I'm sticking with my loose leaf tea, which always makes me feel very sophisticated. It's called melody. Asam. I bought it. I think I talked about it last episode, actually.

Sarah: Isn't this the one you had last time?

Felicity: Yes, but that's okay. I actually spent a fair amount of money on it. I'm intending on drinking it frequently, and I'm actually really enjoying it a lot more than I thought I would.

Sarah: Would you offer it out to other people?

Felicity: Yes, I'm actually trying to offer it to people because I think other people need to recognize that it is sometimes worth spending more than it costs for a Yorkshire tea bag.

Sarah: Yeah, it's quite refreshing. Well, I've got a bit of peace because I think with the fact that we don't really drink coffee, it is a bit limiting, isn't it, just on the tea thing. So I've actually got hot chocolate in my hand.

Felicity: Well, that is pleasing, especially as we're kind of vaguely heading towards winter and hot chocolacy kind of times.

Sarah: Yeah, I think so. It's lovely.

Felicity: Have you made it with milk or water, though? Because that's a bit of a game changer.

Sarah: I put the powder in and then I put maybe like a 6th of the cup is then milk, and I mix it into a paste and then I put the hot water on top and it bubbles up.

Felicity: Very well trained in that, I feel. I feel we've come from the same background of being trained. So we were talking before we got going about how we actually discuss Esther, not just us, but also those who are listening and what it might look like to actually pick up a conversation with someone about this. So assuming that someone has said to a friend, hey, there's this podcast these two vaguely listenable to, people are talking about Esther. Do you want to listen along with me?

Sarah: What happens next?

Felicity: How do you actually start a conversation about it?

Sarah: Great question. I think it can be quite tricky. Sometimes it can feel a bit awkward, kind of getting into that territory. But that is why we've got the show notes questions over a cup of tea, questions for that reason, to just kind of make that segue a little bit easier and they just kind of unpack where they just help people to just think a little bit deeper. And what we've been chatting about and get into the text themselves. I think temptation with something like this is that you trust what we say, rather than actually just having a look for yourself. Does that make sense?

Felicity: Yeah, I think that's right. And in that, then so do have a look at the show note questions, because make use of them. And what we've done is we've tried to make it so that there's a couple of questions that get you into the text for yourself, just kind of observationally, like what's actually being said. And then we're thinking, well, what does

that actually mean? And helping to drive it to the heart. And the thing is, our conversations are really quite short. I'm watching our stopwatch go down and it's getting shorter, but so our conversations are really quite short, so they're just a starting point. So there's so much more that could be talked about, isn't there? So we'd really encourage you to just give it a go, even if it feels a bit awkward at first. I think you begin to find your rhythm on these things, don't you, if you're used to doing a different angle.

Sarah: But let's get cracking because time is running down the clock already. Yes. Is that how you say it? Is that the phrase?

Felicity: I'm not sure, but let's move on. The clock is ticking. Yeah, that one.

Sarah: OK, I'm reading chapter eight. That same day, King Zirkse gave Queen Esther the estate of Hayman, the enemy of the Jews, and Mordecai came into the presence of the king, for Esther had told how he was related to her. The king took off his signet ring, which he had reclaimed from Hayman, and presented it to Mordecai, and Esther appointed him over Haman's estate. Esther again pleaded with the king, falling at his feet and weeping. She begged him to put an end to the evil plan of Hayman the Agagite, which he had devised against the Jews. Then the king extended the goldceptor to Esther and she arose and stood before him. If it pleases the king, she said, and if he regards me with favor and thinks it the right thing to do, and if he has pleased with me, let an order be written overruling the dispatches that Haman, son of Hamadha the agudite, devised and wrote to destroy the Jews in all the king's promises. For how can I bear to see disaster fall on my people? How can I bear to see the destruction of my family? King Zurichers replied to Queen Esther and to Mordorka the Jew, because Haman attacked the Jews. I have given his estate to Esther and they have impaled him on a pole he set up. Now, write another decree in the king's name on behalf of the Jews, as it seems best to you, and seal it with the king's signet ring, for no document written in the king's name and sealed with his ring can be revoked at once. The royal secretaries were summoned on the 23rd day of the third month, the month of silence. They wrote out all of Moderacy's orders to the Jews and to the satraps governors and nobles of 127 provinces stretching from India to Kush. These orders were written in the script of each province and the language of each people, and also to the Jews in their own script and language. Modicai wrote in the name of King Xerxes, sealed the dispatches with the king's signet ring and sent them by mounted couriers who rode fast horses especially bred for the king. The king's edict granted the Jews in every city the right to assemble and protect themselves, to destroy, kill and annihilate the armed men of any nationality or province who might attack them and their women and children and to plunder the property of their enemies. The day appointed for the Jews to do this in all the provinces of King's Erxes was a 13th day of the 12th month of the month of Ada. A copy of the text of the edict was to be issued as law in every province and made known to the people of every nationality so that the Jews would be ready on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies. The couriers riding the royal horses went out, spurred on by the king's command, and the edict was issued in the citadel of Southern. When Wardecai left the king's presence, he was wearing royal garments of blue and white, a large crown of gold and a purple robe of fine linen. And the city of Sousa held a joyous celebration for the Jews. It was a time of happiness and joy, gladness and honor. In every province and in every city to which the edict of the king came. There was joy and gladness among the Jews with feasting and celebrating. And many people of other nationalities became Jews because fear of the Jews had seized them.

Felicity: Yay. It's all turning out okay. It's so good, isn't it? We're on the final stretch, aren't we, in terms of where we're at in Esther? If you've just joined us now, you might want to actually go back a few episodes and listen to the beginning, because this is the triumphant culmination. And what a scene. What a scene of joy, joy, joy it really is.

Sarah: And as you say, it's such a combination of what's happened. And I think one of the biggest things that we noticed going through this, isn't it? Is that it's? I think in a couple of episodes ago, we were talking about how different chapters mirror one another in the structure of the book. And what's really noticeable is how much this chapter, chapter eight, mirrors chapter three and kind of undoes everything that happened in that chapter.

Felicity: Yes. And it's like Mordecai and Hayman have kind of switched places, haven't they? Because it was the one who was given the ring, like, ordered this decree, sent it out, all of those things.

Sarah: Interesting.

Felicity: I find it kind of all points to really how Zerksy's is not that great a guy, really. But he's not very involved. He kind of gives his authority over just so easily. And, I mean, I'm glad he's given it to Mordecai at this point.

Sarah: But it is interesting.

Felicity: That really is between Haman and Mordecai. So as we see Hayman go down and we see Mordecai rise and so we know that the fortunes of God's people are on the app as well.

Sarah: Yeah, big time. I think it's just I just find it fascinating. It's all the details. Like, the narrator seems really specific in kind of reversing all the details. So, as you mentioned, it's the signet ring, given it's the decree, it's how the edict is kind of broadcast. It's the contents of the edict. It's exactly the opposite of what, you know, it was originally said the exact day.

Felicity: Yeah, absolutely.

Sarah: Mordecai's clothing, I think, is just, again, like, really interesting. Just the fact that he's now in robes and he was in sackcloth, and the emotions of God's people, they were bewildered at end of chapter three. And now they're like, joyous just everything, isn't it? It's really interesting going back over and just, like, underlining everything that's been reversed yeah.

Felicity: And thinking about why that is actually happening. It is so perfectly kind of constructed, isn't it? And it's not that it's made up in that sense, but I think the narrator is showing us that God is absolutely in control of every detail. And I feel like the beauty of it and the kind of structural mirroring of it just highlights all the more. God really has got it all, every single detail. And that's not just true of Esther. That's true of history as a whole. And that's part of what we see here as well, isn't it? So we're seeing the reversal in terms of the mirroring of chapter three, but we're seeing it's beginning to point us to a greater reversal, isn't it, of what's going to happen for God's people throughout history and ultimately at the end of time.

Sarah: Yeah, for sure. And I think yeah, it's just been so rich, hasn't it? Started to see that kind of unpack itself in the book and really starting to see the full weight of it now? I think I don't know about you. I think really struck about the timing, just how specific the timing has been. So the fact that God's hand was really over that initial lot when it was cast for the Egypt to fall on that particular day in the month of Adar, and then there's been enough time for another edict to go out. So that was like a year. There's enough time for these horses to go out to every province in the empire and reverse the edict in that time. That's just extraordinary, isn't it, that, again, just God's sovereign hand over that kind of detail.

Felicity: Yeah, absolutely. And especially if you think back to the last chunk we were looking at, we were like, Come on, Esther, ask the question. Now. You kind of want to force the timing, but I think this gives us confidence in God's timing in every sense that his salvation comes at exactly the right time, triumph comes at exactly the right time. And I think that means that that kind of just drives us all the more to trust Him with that. I think that's one of the greatest challenges of the Christian life, isn't it? Actually trusting that God's timing is exactly right. This is just how it should be, even when circumstances which for the Jewish people in this time, it must have been hard, wasn't it, to really think, really believe that they should wait on.

Sarah: God's timing big time terrifying, because they're under this huge sentence of death, aren't they? But as we were, we were kind of unpacking this a little bit before and just realizing, actually this happens as a result of prayer and fasting. And so God's people are depending on the Lord all the more. And it's also we've seen Esther step up and step out in faith. We've seen Mordecai gone from hiding his faith to proclaiming it and stepping into it. So we've seen lots of people grow in this timing, haven't we? And I think that's just super encouraging as well as we start to see those kind of details impact through the story, don't you think? I agree.

Felicity: I think that's a really key thing here. So then, rather than it just being about the kind of the grand action and the kind of the thing, obviously we're all bothered about whether God's people are going to be saved in this narrative. But the fact that God is at work in the ordinary, almost the ordinary faithfulness in the background, is so encouraging to us, isn't it? Because actually, it's not all about the big stuff that's going to happen. It is in ordinary every day that God is growing his people and drawing us closer to Him, because I think that is what goes on with Mordeca and Esther. They seem to have a kind of renewed understanding of who God is and a boldness in that, a confidence in their faith, which we haven't seen before.

Sarah: And don't you think that's what he's trying to like what's happening in the book of Esther is that it's kind of firming up that foundation of what we believe about God's sovereignty so that we can be those people who grow in these times, do you think?

Felicity: Yeah, I think that's absolutely right. I think it's like the ground is just being kind of yeah, we're kind of being bedded into this ground that we're more and more certain of, isn't it? The kind of the bedrock of our faith, which obviously is Jesus, but as we trust in Jesus, we trust in God's sovereignty that brings about all of these things according to his purposes. And I think the more we believe that and trust that, the more likely we are to actually keep following Jesus, to keep walking his way and essentially waiting on God's timing in the sense of when Jesus comes back, what it looks like to bring glory to Him. Now, all those kind of questions that are everyday Christian walk kind of things, what about the joy that we have seen here?

Sarah: It's just amazing. It's like a kind of joy bomb, isn't it? It's just like so many joy words at the end of the chapter, which I think the narrator is being really specific again. He's really drawing your attention to that, isn't he? This joy, happiness, gladness, honor, joy, feasting, celebrating, like there's just so much there. And it's the right response, isn't it? It's the right response to what, you know, they're seeing their salvation unpacked and it's the right response. And it's also really challenging in that as well, isn't it? Just how joyful they are. Yeah.

Felicity: I feel like we can see why they're so joyful because they've been on the precipice of disaster, and that has been averted. But for us, actually, if we think about the big story of where we're at, we are sinners on the precipice of kind of God's Roth, and then we're saved. And yet we kind of lack joy, don't we? Because it's hard to think about that in the everyday. So I think this is a really good kind of reminder of the level of joy that maybe we should have as we think about salvation. You were challenging me earlier. Have we just become a bit dull in the way that we feel that joy?

Sarah: Not have we become dull? Have our hearts become dull? Craze.

Felicity: That is true. Slightly different meaning. I see that.

Sarah: No, I think I was just reminded of Paul's command of the Philippines where he says, I tell you again, rejoice in the Lord always. And I think we're really we're really quick to neglect that command. And it is a command, and it takes work to rejoice. It's not a kind of just, I'm going to wake up happy every day. Of course we're not. And these guys actually, God hasn't saved them yet. There's still a couple of chapters to come, but there's still an intentional joy in him at work, in God at work. And actually just thinking through, okay, what is it like to remain soft and hard towards our salvation? How do we intentionally cultivate that and think upon those things?

Felicity: Yeah, absolutely. And I think a part of that is seeing it more and more. Is it it's the more we see it. So reading something like Esther see it, realize how that applies to us, delight in it, and then it's just a continual thing, isn't it? We need reminding of it every day.

Sarah: Every day. Every day. But there's also a ripple effect of their joy, isn't there? People, other people are joining God's people. And yes, we don't know all the motivations here, and some are out of fear, but there's a sense where the narrative just pointing us back to Abraham's promise and pointing us forward to the Great Commission, where saying, this is for all nations. Like this joy is for all nations, because salvation is for everyone, and all nations will be blessed. And that's really exciting.

Felicity: Yeah, I wholeheartedly agree. As we think on these things, then actually, it lays open the opportunity to just consider, do we actually feel like this? Are our hearts inclined

towards being excited in this way, being joyful in this way, as you say? Not a false joy, but just a kind of looking at what God is doing and having confidence in that and trusting that and being delighted in that. And so should we pray? Let's be prayers in an open, honest fashion.

Sarah: I think it just opens a candid conversation with the Lord, doesn't it? Because actually, of course, we don't feel like this the whole time. And of course, of course. But actually, we can just come to the Lord in the reality of where we're at with that, whether we're feeling far from the Lord or whether we're doing fine or whatever it is, comes to Lord and ask Him to grow that joy in us, grow our wonder and marveling at this salvation. Christie, would you pray for us in that vein?

Felicity: Yes, Father. God, we praise you that we can come to you in all honesty without having to pretend to be anything we're not. We praise you that you are the One who enables us to have joy. And so we pray that you would help us as we consider our salvation, as we see the big picture of what you're doing in Esther and see how that points to the Lord Jesus. We pray that we would be delighted in our inner being, in our hearts by what you are doing. Give us joy, Father, that we might be like these people here, that we read of an ester full of joy for Your glory.

Sarah: Amen. Amen. Well, do you remember to check out the show note questions? That has felt, as ever, like a whistlestop tour. So much that we haven't dwell on in that chapter. And it's so rich. They do make the most of just going over it by yourself or with someone else, grab someone else, and why not sit down and recapture it together? And we look forward to rounding up Esther next week.

Felicity: Can you believe it? We're almost done. Crazy. It is good. A wonderful thing. OK, see you all next time.

Sarah: Goodbye. Thanks so much for listening. This podcast has been sponsored by ten of those.com.