

[Esther 4:11-17](#)

Our Desperate Need For God

Introduction

What are some words that you would use to describe the times in which we live? Chaotic, desperate, evil? Furthermore, is there any hope out there? Does it seem everything is out of control? Why is there so much suffering and violence? Where can truth be found? And what about trustworthiness? Can anyone be trusted in this culture?

We live in desperate times. Esther, the queen of the Persian Empire, and Mordecai her cousin, the main characters in the book of Esther, lived in desperate times too. But God is in control now, as He was then. Even the lives of the pagan king of Persia, King Ahasuerus, and his evil right-hand man, Haman, were under God's control.

Living in desperate times means we desperately need God. That's the theme of this message. Here are three (3) main points to allow us to apprehend the fact that we desperately need God because He is absolutely:

- Sovereign
- True
- Trustworthy

Background on the book of Esther

The book of Esther covers the period 486-465 B.C. This was after the Jews were in Babylonian exile and Persia had replaced Babylon as the ruling power. The author that God inspired to write the book of Esther is unknown. Some scholars speculate it could have been Mordecai or even Ezra or Nehemiah.

When we read this inconspicuous book of the Old Testament, it appears that Esther and Mordecai are the heroes. They aren't. God is the hero! And even though the book of Esther never mentions God once, not once, His fingerprints of sovereignty, truthfulness and trustworthiness are everywhere on its pages.

1. God Is Absolutely Sovereign

The book of Esther is a testimony to God's absolute sovereignty and providence over all things. Here's an example. Take a look at [Esther 5:14-6:1](#). The wife of Haman, the king's right-hand man, is speaking here.

“Let a gallows fifty cubits high be made, and in the morning tell the king to have Mordecai hanged upon it. Then go joyfully with the king to the feast.” This idea pleased Haman, and he had the gallows made.

[Esth 5:14](#) (ESV)

On that night the king could not sleep. And he gave orders to bring the book of memorable deeds, the chronicles, and they were read before the king.

[Esth 6:1](#) (ESV)

Was it just coincidence that King Ahasuerus couldn't sleep that night and read about Mordecai's revealing of the plot to lay hands on the king? Were these circumstances by chance? Did they all just happen? Or was the unseen God working through seemingly random and in this case inconsequential events?

According to the definition of God's sovereignty, God by His wisdom, love and care directs all things in the universe. The doctrine of divine providence states that God is in control of all things. He is sovereign over the universe ([Psalm 103:19](#)), the physical world ([Matthew 5:45](#)), the affairs of nations ([Psalm 66:7](#)), human destiny ([Galatians 1:15](#)), human successes and failures ([Luke 1:52](#)), and the protection of His people ([Psalm 4:8](#)). This doctrine is opposed to the idea that the universe is governed by chance or fate.

Remember, there's absolutely nothing that's not under God's sovereignty and providence. That includes you and me, good or bad, big or small; God is in control of it all. In fact, **your life may seem like it is out of control, but it is always under God's control.** If you don't believe it, here's [Proverbs 16:9](#).

The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps. [Prov 16:9](#) (ESV)

Here's an example of God's providence in a life-defining moment that impacted Dale and Nancy Olson, who attend La Crescent Evangelical Free Church (LEFC). Nancy's doctor was diagnosing a health concern utilizing a CT scan. Because the CT scan covered a larger area than was required, cancer was discovered in a different part of her body. Surgery was done and because the cancer was caught early, no further treatments are required. According to Dale, "She is recovering wonderfully." Did all of this happen by chance or was it God's sovereignty and providence?

But some of you may be saying, "If God is sovereign and His providence is over all things, Steve, how can there be so many bad things in the world, such as suffering and violence? How can God be in control when there's starvation, abortion and natural disasters, just to name a few?" Those are hard questions to answer. There are many things that are a mystery with regards to God that we cannot know. That's a hard truth to embrace, but it's a good truth. Here's [Lamentations 3:37-38](#) and [Isaiah 45:7](#) to help give some insight.

³⁷ Who has spoken and it came to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it? ³⁸ Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and bad come? [Lam 3:37-38](#) (ESV)

I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things.
[Isaiah 45:7](#) (ESV)

We live in a fallen world. God is not the author of evil, but uses evil for His good purposes. Joseph's story in the book of Genesis is a good example, as is the story of Jesus' death on the cross. Joseph's brothers treated him harshly, throwing him into a pit, then selling him as a slave. Yet, Joseph later told his brothers "As for you, you meant evil

against me, but God meant it for good..." ([Genesis 50:20](#)). Jesus' death on the cross was cruel and inhumane. Yet, God purposed it so that sinners like you and me could be forgiven of our sin and made right with God ([Isaiah 53:5,10](#)).

The book of Esther isn't a story about luck, chance or coincidence. Neither are the details of your and my life. Esther points to the truth that God's sovereignty is always perfect; it's always working for the good, even when evil abounds. In His providence, God in Christ upholds the universe and nothing is outside of His control ([Hebrews 1:3](#) and [Colossians 1:17](#)). And because God is absolutely sovereign, there's reason to rest in the fact that God is absolutely true.

2. God is Absolutely True

Mordecai asked Queen Esther to approach the throne of King Ahasuerus and plead with him on behalf of the lives of the Jewish people. Esther's trepidation in her response is evident, as she knows death is certain for anyone approaching the king without being called ([Esther 4:11](#)).

But Mordecai responds to Esther with outright, no-nonsense, absolute truth ([Esther 4:12-14](#)). He didn't mince any words. In essence, he told Esther that she wouldn't escape death any more than the other Jews unless she spoke up to the king. In addition, Mordecai hits home the truth that this could be the time and place of Esther's life-defining moment.

Mordecai was resolute, confident that everything God said was true. Esther knew this in her head, but the fear of man made her waver. At the end, though, she embraced truth by trusting God as absolutely true. As was the case with Esther, **truth is often hard to hear because it often reveals what we'd rather not hear**. However, life's defining moments come in difficulties and trials where embracing truth points to our desperate need for Jesus.

Sam Srock, who attends LEFC, can tell you about clinging to Jesus in a life-defining moment. Sam's brother, Seth, was in a horrendous motorcycle accident in June 2018. With multiple bone fractures and internal injuries, there's no way he should be alive. Several surgeries were needed. In this desperate situation, Sam and his family were faced with a life-defining moment in which their loved one might die. They embraced truth. They realized their desperate need for Jesus through seeking God's face in prayer.

According to Sam, Seth's healing has been miraculous. He'll be okay. Here's what Sam had to say about the whole situation: "Ultimately he (Seth) needs prayer to be able to see Christ in all of this and to not be bitter toward God that this happened to him. From my talks with him, he has questions as to why God let this happen." But then there's the question "Why wouldn't God purpose hard things like this?" Remember, God uses suffering to accomplish His good purposes, including displaying His grace and mercy.

As I was reflecting upon the events of September 11, 2001, I was reminded by the Holy Spirit that God's character is true and right. He rules and reigns over all things, including the unimaginable suffering and violence of that day. Then our elder chairperson, John Young, sent an article to the elders concerning September 11 written by Jared Wilson, an

author and Director of Content Strategy for Midwestern Seminary. Mr. Wilson wrote this: "I can think of at least one idea much more distressing than the idea that "the Lord reigns" in moments of devastation. The idea that he doesn't."

Life's defining moments, which include devastating events and desperate situations, point to the truth that we desperately need God. This is especially the case when life seems out of control and God appears absent or uninterested. Embracing the fact that God in Christ is absolute truth ([John 14:6](#)) is a comforting assurance. In fact, Jesus says that if you abide in Him, you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free ([John 8:31-32](#)). That's really good news, which is the meaning of the word gospel. God is truth. He does not lie ([Titus 1:2](#)). His Word, the Bible, proves true as we see in [Psalm 18:30](#).

This God—his way is perfect; the word of the LORD proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.

[Psalms 18:30](#) (ESV)

If you're searching for truth in a world full of despair and chaos, Jesus is the answer. God in Christ is calling people to freedom in the truth. Whether you've never put faith in Christ or you have, God is more interested in our holiness than our happiness. He is more concerned with our character than our reputation. God is truth. He speaks truth. He cares about transforming lives to experience His grace and truth.

Embracing truth, no matter how hard it is to hear, is essential to resting in the fact that God Himself is truth. And resting in God as absolute truth means He is absolutely trustworthy.

3. God is Absolutely Trustworthy

Queen Esther realized that her life, as well as the lives of her people, depended upon the absolute trustworthiness of God. In fact, Esther decided it would be better to be obedient and dead, than to be disobedient and alive ([Esther 4:15-17](#)). This was Esther's life-defining moment and it brought her face-to-face with a realization that applies to our lives today. We can acquiesce to the world or we can stand firm in the God who is trustworthy.

God's absolute trustworthiness is bigger and bolder than we can imagine. Even when He seems absent or non-caring, God is orchestrating all things for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose ([Romans 8:28](#)). God called Esther and Mordecai according to His purpose and in His timing. They and the other Jews in the city of Susa went on a fast for three days and nights. Fasting means weakness for the body, but strengthening the spirit to trust God in a time of trial.

Indeed God is trustworthy, but His blessings and deliverances are not always physical and tangible. For example, a man on a path that would lead him to adultery with a coworker loses his job. Someone takes a stand for an ethical decision is denied a promotion. A classmate shares her faith with a friend and the friendship ends.

Who or what do you and I put our trust and confidence in? Is it in the God who is always trustworthy or is it in something or someone else? Perhaps we're trusting in the appeal of religiosity, the power of money, or a strong addiction to job, social status, drugs or sex. God says to trust in Him and be blessed. Here's [Jeremiah 17:7](#).

“Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD.
[Jer 17:7](#) (ESV)

Because God is absolutely trustworthy, Esther was willing to risk her life and receive the king's wrath on behalf of her people ([Esther 4:16b](#)). That's a picture of the cross of Christ. Jesus was willing to receive the wrath of God on behalf of His people. He was willing to die so that sinners like you and me could live. That's good news. That's the gospel message of the cross.

Jesus is the Good News. He is the Gospel. Even though the path of life can be difficult and scary, He leads those who follow Him to places that are good and safe. He deeply loves those who belong to Him ([Psalm 23](#)). Jesus is the Light of the world. Along the winding and often steep path of life, He can be depended upon as the light and lamp to guide the way to safety ([John 8:12](#) and [Psalm 119:105](#)). Jesus is the fullness of grace and truth ([John 1:17](#)). In fact, He is the only truth and the only way to God ([John 14:6](#)). Those who trust Jesus are indeed set free from sin ([John 8:36](#)).

Isn't that good news? Because of Christ, anyone trusting Him can confidently approach the throne of God to receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need ([Hebrews 4:16](#)). Tim Keller, pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, says this about those who have trusted the Lord Jesus as Friend, Savior and Lord with childlike faith. "The only person who dares wake up a king at 3 a.m. for a glass of water is a child. We have that kind of access."

If you've never received Christ through faith alone by God's grace alone, do you realize how desperate a situation you're in? Apart from Christ, you're a child of wrath like the rest of mankind. Your punishment is an eternal death in hell where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. It's like Queen Esther approaching King Ahasuerus' throne without being invited. The consequence is a certain death.

If you haven't done so already, would you like to receive Him today? Repent and believe. Repent means to turn from sin toward Jesus. Believe means trusting Him as your Sovereign Lord, your Truthful and Trustworthy God. He will deliver you from the domain of darkness and transfer you to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins ([Colossians 1:13-14](#)).

Words of Warning

With that said, here are some words of warning that will qualify me as a not so typical evangelist. That's okay because Jesus isn't the typical evangelist either. He doesn't mince words. He tells it like it is. So, here comes the truth. **It's risky to follow God; there's a cost to following Jesus; following the Holy Spirit's counsel and being obedient to Him is the narrow, hard way to life.**

Esther and Mordecai, as well as the Jewish people in the Persian Empire, knew the risks for claiming allegiance to the living God. Just read the book of Esther. The Hamans of the world are constantly plotting ways to disrupt, discourage, defeat and put to death those who associate with the sovereign, truthful and trustworthy Lord.

So in light of the chaos, despair and evil all around us, how are we to live as believers in Christ who know God is absolutely sovereign, true and trustworthy? Here's two (2) risks involved in following God that are true, but may not be the truth that we want to hear:

1) Persecution. Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted ([2 Timothy 3:12](#)). Remember, the church is a faith-family, set apart by God for His good purposes amidst the evil of the day. Much like Esther, is the church willing to risk persecution, even unto death, to live for Christ?

2) Dying to self. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me ([Galatians 2:20](#)). Perhaps more costly than living for Christ is dying to self. Dying to self means loving Jesus more than ourselves. Do we, as the church, love Jesus so much that we see Him as our greatest Delight and supreme Treasure?

Experiencing persecution or dying to self should not be a deterrent to following Jesus. In his book, *Risky Gospel*, Owen Strachan says this: "Believers are supposed to find incredible, world-shaking confidence in God...[which is] not supposed to paralyze us. It is supposed to create a life of boldness and faith and action and risk."

Conclusion

I want to share a final thought by reiterating the theme of this message. We live in desperate times. We desperately need Jesus. But do we live like we desperately need Jesus? In spite of the chaos, despair and evil all around them, Esther and Mordecai put their confidence in the God who is absolutely sovereign, true and trustworthy. You and I can do that too.

So, I'd like to leave us with some words from the great old hymn, *On Christ The Solid Rock I Stand*. These words reveal that in our desperate need for God, our only hope and confidence is in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.
All other ground is sinking sand.
Amen.