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Welcome to
Wake Up Call
Your weekly email support from WorkNet



Rumours...

There is one thing guaranteed to strike terror into the heart of many Christians in the workplace. It's a strange kind of terror because it rises up in the face of a deep sense of motivation to behave in a particular long-conditioned fashion. Whatever your denominational tradition or background, you're likely to have in common with your believers, a concept that witnessing at work is an activity in which, ideally, you should participate.

Sermon upon sermon upon book sound the call to witness to your faith. Some sermons seem to imply that witnessing is the main reason to go to work at all. Yet the witnessing moment for many, if not the majority, is synonymous with a stress moment.

This fear, like so many of its relatives, is built on a foundation of false beliefs. Somehow under this fear lies a belief that witnessing contains a clear, unambiguous, overt statement of the Christian faith. The activity communicates to the non-believer the information needed to convert.

Armed, or rather disarmed, with this belief, we over-invest in the witnessing possibility and far from being energised, shrink back from speaking out for fear of failing completely, alienating the hearer, embarrassing ourselves and causing irreparable damage to our working relationships.

The book of Esther is the story of believers amongst non-believers. The story of every working week. It documents a series of events where the beleaguered faithful are trying to defend their very existence. It is a narrative of great spiritual depth and leaves the non-believers in no doubt about the position of the minority group.

The book of Esther does not mention God once. Search it in vain for His name. It is simply not there. God is implied, however, in all the actions of the believers. Their behaviour extrapolates to the Divine presence and power. Their story only makes sense if there is a Divine hand at work.

You don't often hear witnessing described as an implication, extrapolation or hidden hand but maybe you should. Rather than be paralysed by terror, maybe

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your first job is to so work as to spread the rumour of God in a world which does not know His name.

WORK WELL

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Here is some biblical background to for this week's Wake Up Call

Esther 4:15- 7:10

Esther 4

¹⁵ Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: ¹⁶ "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."

¹⁷ So Mordecai went away and carried out all of Esther's instructions.

Esther 5

Esther's Request to the King

¹ On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the king's hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall, facing the entrance. ² When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther approached and touched the tip of the sceptre.

³ Then the king asked, "What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you."

⁴ "If it pleases the king," replied Esther, "let the king, together with Haman, come today to a banquet I have prepared for him."

⁵ "Bring Haman at once," the king said, "so that we may do what Esther asks."

So the king and Haman went to the banquet Esther had prepared. ⁶ As they were drinking wine, the king again asked Esther, "Now what is your petition? It will be given you. And what is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted."

⁷ Esther replied, "My petition and my request is this: ⁸ If the king regards me with favour and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare for them. Then I will answer the king's question."

Haman's Rage Against Mordecai

⁹ Haman went out that day happy and in high spirits. But when he saw Mordecai at the king's gate and observed that he neither rose nor showed fear in his presence, he was filled with rage against Mordecai. ¹⁰ Nevertheless, Haman restrained himself and went home.

Calling together his friends and Zeresh, his wife, ¹¹ Haman boasted to them about his vast wealth, his many sons, and all the ways the king had honoured him and how he had elevated him above the other nobles and officials. ¹² "And that's not all," Haman added. "I'm the only person Queen Esther invited to accompany the king to the banquet she

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gave. And she has invited me along with the king tomorrow. ¹³ But all this gives me no satisfaction as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the king's gate."

¹⁴ His wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, "Have a gallows built, seventy-five feet high, and ask the king in the morning to have Mordecai hanged on it. Then go with the king to the dinner and be happy." This suggestion delighted Haman, and he had the gallows built.

Esther 6

Mordecai Honoured

¹ That night the king could not sleep; so he ordered the book of the chronicles, the record of his reign, to be brought in and read to him. ² It was found recorded there that Mordecai had exposed Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway, who had conspired to assassinate King Xerxes.

³ "What honour and recognition has Mordecai received for this?" the king asked.

"Nothing has been done for him," his attendants answered.

⁴ The king said, "Who is in the court?" Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the palace to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai on the gallows he had erected for him.

⁵ His attendants answered, "Haman is standing in the court."

"Bring him in," the king ordered.

⁶ When Haman entered, the king asked him, "What should be done for the man the king delights to honour?"

Now Haman thought to himself, "Who is there that the king would rather honour than me?" ⁷ So he answered the king, "For the man the king delights to honour, ⁸ have them bring a royal robe the king has worn and a horse the king has ridden, one with a royal crest placed on its head. ⁹ Then let the robe and horse be entrusted to one of the king's most noble princes. Let them robe the man the king delights to honour, and lead him on the horse through the city streets, proclaiming before him, 'This is what is done for the man the king delights to honour!' "

¹⁰ "Go at once," the king commanded Haman. "Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king's gate. Do not neglect anything you have recommended."

¹¹ So Haman got the robe and the horse. He robed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city streets, proclaiming before him, "This is what is done for the man the king delights to honour!"

¹² Afterward Mordecai returned to the king's gate. But Haman rushed home, with his head covered in grief, ¹³ and told Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him.

His advisers and his wife Zeresh said to him, "Since Mordecai, before whom your downfall has started, is of Jewish origin, you cannot stand against him—you will surely come to ruin!" ¹⁴ While they were still talking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and hurried Haman away to the banquet Esther had prepared.

Esther 7

Haman Hanged

¹ So the king and Haman went to dine with Queen Esther,

² and as they were drinking wine on that second day, the

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king again asked, "Queen Esther, what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted."

³ Then Queen Esther answered, "If I have found favour with you, O king, and if it pleases your majesty, grant me my life-this is my petition. And spare my people-this is my request. ⁴ For I and my people have been sold for destruction and slaughter and annihilation. If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because no such distress would justify disturbing the king. "

⁵ King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, "Who is he? Where is the man who has dared to do such a thing?"

⁶ Esther said, "The adversary and enemy is this vile Haman."

Then Haman was terrified before the king and queen. ⁷ The king got up in a rage, left his wine and went out into the palace garden. But Haman, realizing that the king had already decided his fate, stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life.

⁸ Just as the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet hall, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was reclining.

The king exclaimed, "Will he even molest the queen while she is with me in the house?"

As soon as the word left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. ⁹ Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs attending the king, said, "A gallows seventy-five feet [high stands by Haman's house. He had it made for Mordecai, who spoke up to help the king."

The king said, "Hang him on it!" ¹⁰ So they hanged Haman on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king's fury subsided.

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