

The Lord Turns the Heart Wherever He Wishes

by Rolaant McKenzie



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In the story of Esther, a young woman part of the Jewish exiles in Persia, through a series of providential circumstances, rose to become queen with King Ahasuerus. Though not explicitly stated in the account, it was clear that God arranged for Esther to be at that place at that time to play a crucial role in saving her people from annihilation.

When President Donald Trump nominated federal judge Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court of the United States on September 26, 2020, to replace the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, many Christians and pro-life conservatives expressed hope that the new prospective Justice would be like a modern-day Esther in that she might be instrumental in overturning *Roe vs. Wade*, the 1973 Supreme Court decision credited with opening the door to legalized abortion in the United States.

After nearly 50 years of ending the lives of babies in the womb, and outside of the womb in many cases, the abolishment of abortion in the United States would be like someone condemned to death being granted clemency and the prospect of a new life.

Her record as a judge, law professor, being a devout Roman Catholic, and dedication to her husband and seven children increased the expectation that should a case come before the Supreme Court dealing with abortion, she would come down on

the side of supporting life.

However, many times over the years those believing in the sanctity of human life in all its stages, especially those who have devoted their lives to prayer and the cause of protecting life, have felt great hope whenever a president professing to share their values on this issue nominated a judge for the Supreme Court, only for that hope to be dashed when the judge would later rule in a way inconsistent with protecting life.

Though at this time the hope was fulfilled on June 24, 2022, with the overturning of Roe vs. Wade by the Supreme Court (Justice Barrett joining the majority opinion with Justices Thomas, Alito, Gorsuch, and Kavanaugh), placing faith in human leaders like this is never a sure thing, for whatever good that can be accomplished is often unsure and temporary at best, and many times little to no good comes. Either way this can lead to great disillusionment.

“Do not trust in princes, in mortal man, in whom there is no salvation. His spirit departs, he returns to the earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.” (Psalm 146:3-4)

However, we can trust always in the Lord, who is more than able to turn the hearts of governors, presidents, and kings to accomplish His will in His perfect time. The best laid plans of the most powerful in the world are helpless and weak before the purposes and will of God.

“The king’s heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes.” (Proverbs 21:1)

An example of this can be seen in the account of Cyrus the Great (559 BC–530 BC), King of Persia, whom the Lord moved to free the Jewish captives in Babylon and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1-4). And, in the story of Nehemiah, who prayed to God that his request to King Artaxerxes I (465 BC–424 BC) be granted to allow him to go to Jerusalem and rebuild its walls (Nehemiah 2:1-8).

Near the beginning of the 1971 movie adaptation of the 1964 Broadway musical *Fiddler on the Roof*, the rabbi of the Ukrainian village of Anatevka is leaving the synagogue with his students. They asked him various questions as they went down the steps into the village. One of them asked if there was a proper blessing for the czar. With a smile, the rabbi replied, "A blessing for the czar? Of course. May God bless and keep the czar ... far away from us!"

While we can see the humor in the rabbi's comments, it is proper to petition the Lord to move in the hearts and minds of political leaders to effect welfare and justice in society, especially in relation to the ability of believers to serve the Lord in peace and share the gospel.

"First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2:1-3)

Human beings come into this world condemned to death due to the sin of the first man Adam and the sin nature handed down to us. But because of the death of Jesus on the cross that paid in full the sin debt for sinners, and His resurrection from the dead, the repentant sinner who trusts in Him alone will rise from death to newness of life that will never fade away.

Prayers made to God's on behalf of those who wield power and influence in society provide great opportunities for followers of Jesus Christ to be salt and light wherever they live (Matthew 5:13-16). That is, to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to preserve and extend what is good, proclaim this message of forgiveness and salvation to all, and bring glory to God.

Though we may not always get the leaders we wish, we should remember that God works all things after the counsel of His will (Ephesians 1:11), and that the prayers of His people can accomplish much good (James 5:16). Regardless of who arises to political power where we reside, the Lord remains the same God who never leaves or forsakes us (Hebrews 13:5-6). It is His continual presence that encourages us, gives us hope, and energizes us to be an extension of His love and grace in the world.

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