

Esther Chapter 4

- 17 years before the events we're reading about this morning the Jews had been given an incredible opportunity. Cyrus the great, the Persian king at that time released the Jews to return to their home land, they were free to go if they pleased. About 60K took advantage of that offer, and returned to Jerusalem and Judea.
 - The vast majority however rejected that free offer of freedom. They may have been afraid to leave their comfortable homes and lives, they may have feared the hardships that lie in store for those who would return. Even though they'd not stepped out that way, God had not forgotten them, nor forsaken them - He is faithful. It's not about our performance, it's about His.
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V: 1-3 The news of the king's decree, or Haman's decree via the king, reaches Mordecai who reacts with grief and utter dismay, as do the rest of the Jews throughout the kingdom. There is great mourning, fasting, weeping, wailing, sackcloth, and ashes.

- Tearing one's garments, putting on sackcloth, and throwing or putting ashes on their heads was a sign of grief, as if one of their family members had died, actually that was what they were anticipating.

The Jews can be a very expressive people:

Ezra 9:3 "And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished."

- They began to fast, and presumably to pray, and to cry out to God.
- Mordecai stood before, but was careful not enter the king's gate. None were allowed to enter while in mourning - no one could mourn in the presence of the king, being in the presence of the king was a great privilege and it was an occasion for great joy, not mourning.

V: 4 Esther was in the palace, but she had not heard the news until this time, and when she did, like all the other Jews, she was grieved.

- She immediately sent for Mordecai - but he wouldn't accept the change of clothes, meaning he could not stop grieving at that point.

V: 5-9 Esther doesn't give up, she sends her chamberlain to talk to Mordecai and figure out what is happening.

- Mordecai relates all the events leading up to the proclamation, including the price on their heads.
- Mordecai then adds the exhortation for Esther to use her influence and her access to the king to plead for the lives of her people.

V: 10-12 Hatach has become the messenger between Esther and Mordecai.

- Esther explains to Mordecai the protocol of the royal court and that no one just walks in un-invited - upon penalty of death, and that she hasn't been called or invited in over a month.
- Esther is asking Mordecai "do you realize what you're asking?" He is asking her to risk her life on behalf of their people because more than likely Mordecai already knew what she was talking about.

V: 13-14 Mordecai admonishes Esther not to think that she'll be safe in the king's palace, she will share the same fate as all the rest of the Jews.

- Mordecai further admonishes her that if she holds her peace and says nothing; God will raise up another deliverer in her place but that she and her father's house will be destroyed.
- I've had the unfortunate experience of the Holy Spirit prompting me to talk to someone, to witness or share Jesus with them, and I've been disobedient, or balked - only to see God raise up someone else who has walked over to them and done exactly what the Lord told me to do - God is able to raise up deliverance, He is able to do His will with or without our participation, but oh what a blessing when we get to participate!
- In his statement Mordecai indicates that He trusts in the Lord to deliver them. Mordecai knows that the Lord has made promises to Israel that have yet to be fulfilled, he knows that the Messiah will come one day - and that the nation and people of Israel cannot and will not be destroyed - simply because he knows that God keeps His Word!
- And who knows if this isn't the exact reason why God put her in the palace and the presence of the king to begin with, for just such a time as this.
- How many times had she thought, had she wondered how did I ever get here, and what am I doing here?
- God had indeed placed her there for this very reason, and even though she was appointed to this - it would all still be a test of her faith.

Hebrews 11:6 “But without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”

- God has a purpose for each of us, and like Esther he prepares us for just that moment that we would be used to fulfill His purposes.

Ephesians 2:10 “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

- Paul is saying that God has set out a plan for each of our lives, He has fore-ordained the work that He intends for us to do for His glory. He’s already got it all worked out; but in the mean time, He’s working in us, preparing us, for the work that He’s set out for us.

Jeremiah 29:11 “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.” (To bring you to an expected end. NKJV)

V: 15-17 Esther’s response: get everyone together and fast (pray) for three days, she’ll do the same - fasting and prayer are often found together in scripture, even though prayer is not mentioned specifically here.

- Fasting is a preparation for focused or concentrated prayer. In and of itself fasting is not a guarantee that God will bless. Fasting must be accompanied by a sincere and broken spirit, and humility before the Lord, if it becomes a formal religious ritual then it serves no purpose.

Psalms 51:17 “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”

- After they’ve fasted for 3 days, then she’ll go in to the king. *“If I perish, I perish...”*
- She basically commits her life to the Lord, trusts in Him to do as He will.

Romans 14:7-8 “⁷For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. ⁸For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s.”

Esther Chapter 5

V: 1-2 Esther waited for the 3 days of fasting and prayer to end, seeking the Lord's favor - then she went for it, she took that step / steps of faith.

- As she approached the inner court in her royal apparel, passing the point of no return, the king acknowledged her, extending the royal sceptre which as she drew near she touched, or perhaps kissed.
- The drama of the moment is fascinating, this beloved wife of the king didn't know if she'd be welcomed into the presence of the king, she didn't know if her life was forfeit or not - and had to be relieved when Ahasuerus extended the scepter.

We're told:

Hebrews 10:19-23 “¹⁹Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; ²¹And having an high priest over the house of God; ²²Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for He is faithful that promised;”

- Because of the shed blood of Jesus Christ we can have boldness to enter into the very throne room of God, we can go into the Holy of Holies, having full assurance, complete confidence, faith without wavering - because of what Jesus has done for us!
- For **three days** Esther had had a death sentence hanging over her head. Three days of uncertainty, three days thinking she was dead.
- **Three days:** Abraham travelled with his son Isaac for three days to mount Moriah - his son being dead to him, then resurrected through a substitutionary sacrifice, on the 3rd day.
- Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, dead and buried.
- Like Abraham, like Jonah, and now Esther, most importantly like Jesus - three days, three nights in the grave, then the glorious resurrection unto new life - life out of death, all of which points to Jesus!

V: 3-5 The king then asks what she wants, and pretty much says you can have whatever you ask up to half the kingdom; this was kind of a typical eastern overstatement intending to convey generosity and favor. Basically saying “whatever you want, it's yours.”

- This was also an indication that she has both favor with the king - and favor with God who gave her the favor with the king.

Proverbs 21:1 “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will.”

- Esther has obviously formulated a plan, part of which is to invite Ahasuerus and Haman to a banquet, and set Haman up. A divinely inspired ambush!

Psalm 7:15 “He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made.”

- The king orders Haman to hurry up and get ready, and to be there.

V: 6-8 Once at the banquet of wine.... Ahasuerus renews his question: “what do you want,” or “how can I help you,” again adding the phrase you can ask for up to half the kingdom, or anything you want, it’s yours.

- All of this is part of the eastern culture that would drive me nuts! Setting things up slowly, putting off the request and conversation until the next day.
- Some think that perhaps Esther got cold feet; I think that it’s all part of God’s plan and timing, especially in light of the next chapter when the king could not sleep and he ends up blessing Mordecai.

V: 9-11 Haman was elated, he was very excited to be included in this “inner circle” of the king, the queen, and himself - he was “joyful” and “glad” he has no clue that he’s being played like a fiddle and that the evil he has perpetrated is about to catch up to him. He’s been playing the king, and now he’s getting played.

- **“But”** as he is making his way home and people are bowing to him - which he probably enjoyed tremendously he sees that Mordecai still refused to bow and it really upset Haman, now he’s full of indignation.
- Haman refrained or restrained himself, he exercised self-control, he probably wanted to throttle this “little Jew” and teach him a lesson, but we read that he “refrained” himself.
- According to **Galatians 5:22-23** - Self control is a fruit of the Spirit. Thus far we haven’t seen much or any fruit of the Spirit coming out of Haman - but at this point the Holy Spirit has restrained Haman and kept him from harming Mordecai.

2 Thessalonians 2:7 “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only He who now letteth will let, until He be taken out of the way.”

“For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.” NKJV

- God was protecting Mordecai, God protected his servant! He does that!

2 Peter 2:9 “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.”

V: 12-13 From Haman’s perspective there is however a fly in the ointment, his joy cannot be complete because Mordecai still refuses to bow to him or to reverence him.

- He’s spoken of the glory of his riches, the multitude of his children, the king’s promotion, but none of that satisfies, none of that is enough, there is a root of bitterness in his heart and he will not be satisfied until he’s avenged himself upon Mordecai.

Hebrews 12:14-15 “¹⁴Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: ¹⁵Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.”

- Haman’s going to miss the boat on all of this because he’s given himself over to his bitterness, but there is a warning to us that would hear it.

1 Timothy 6:6 “But Godliness with contentment is great gain.”

V: 14 Haman’s wife and his friends suggest that he make a big show, a big gallows to make an example of Mordecai.

- Haman should go in tomorrow and ask the king to hang Mordecai - not knowing that the Lord God of Israel was already speaking into the king’s heart about Mordecai - but not what Haman was hoping for.
- Job’s wife advised him to “curse God and die...” - Job wisely ignored that counsel and was later blessed.
- Haman’s wife advised him to build a gallows and hang Mordecai upon it - Haman foolishly received that counsel which would lead to his own demise.
- The thought of killing Mordecai, hanging him on the gallows pleased Haman.

Proverbs 5:21-23 “²¹For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He pondereth all his goings. ²²His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins. ²³He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.”