

For Such a Time as This

Esther 4

Have you ever had to stand up for what you believe when the consequences for doing so could be dire? Esther has come to that point. It looks like no matter what she does, death will be the outcome. This is the turning point of the story when Esther decides to trust God, and try to save His people.

Grief Observed

When Mordecai hears of the Jews' impending annihilation, he cries out bitterly, tears his clothes, puts on sackcloth and ashes, and goes out into the city (v1). All the Jews respond this way, over 10 million people, fasting, weeping and wailing (v3). Mordecai has just gone public with his faith, and it has brought trouble to him and all his people. This loud and visible grief shows faith, not a lack of it. Mordecai is not "losing it"; he takes care not to go into the king's gate (v2). Trusting God doesn't eliminate our emotions but conforms them to His will. In the Bible we see the Father saddened, the Spirit grieve, and the Son weep (Gen. 6:5; Eph. 4:30; Jn. 11:35). We have to be honest about what we are going through so that we can be served and serve one another (Rom. 12:15). This is how God comforts and strengthens His people.

Count the Cost

Esther hears Mordecai is mourning so she sends him clean clothes, but he refuses (v4). She is ignorant of what's happening, isolated from the king, and has to learn through Hathach, the king's eunuch, of the coming destruction (vv5-7). This whole exchange is done through a servant. Mordecai wants her to address the king, but she responds that everyone knows to approach the king uninvited is to welcome death, and she hasn't been summoned for over a month (vv8-12). Mordecai warns her that being a Jew in the palace won't help, and though God will preserve His people, her family won't be among them (vv13-14). This is not a veiled threat from Mordecai, but a wise father telling his daughter the truth. Esther comes to terms with the fact that she is probably going to die soon, unlike you who are *certainly* going to die in considerably more years. Mordecai juxtaposes two truths: God will deliver the Jews one way or another, but this could be your opportunity to be used by Him (v14). He has faith that regardless of what happens to him, God's word is true and He will protect His people (Gen. 12:2-3). Sometimes the Lord calls us home early, but the plan to save the world is never in question. Jesus prepares us for exactly these outcomes (Jn. 15:18-21). "If I die, I die" (v16).

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Presumption clutches at things not promised; unbelief denies what God could do; but faith believes all things are possible (Mk. 9:23). Esther needed to hear this from Mordecai, and she believed it (cf. Rom. 10:14). Believers *believe*. She isn't resigned to death, but if she goes down it will be swinging. She commands Mordecai to gather all the Jews in the palace to fast for three days with her and her maids (v16). Had Esther given up or hedged her bets, her doubt could well have become a self-fulfilling

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prophecy. Instead, she set herself to seek the Lord as the Jews in the rest of the country already were. God built us to need to eat regularly, so fasting reminds to pray and know our dependence. The phrase “with fasting, weeping and wailing” in verse 3 occurs in Joel 2:12 where God’s people are commanded to seek Him in repentance and hope that He relent from sending calamity. Christians also fast before big decisions as the prophets and teachers did in Antioch before sending out Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:2-3). Esther heard from Mordecai, now she seeks God to bless her.

A Better Mediator

Job despaired that there was no mediator between Him and God (Job 9:2-3, 33). To come into the presence of Holiness is death to a sinner (Rom. 6:23). Jesus went to Father bearing our sin and thus was destroyed. The sinless one became sin, and the Father couldn’t hold out the scepter to Him and remain just. So Jesus bore our just penalty on the cross. He rose and is alive forevermore, interceding for us to the King who welcomes us through Jesus (Rev. 1:18; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25). When we want something, we go to the King, and He receives us as perfect subjects, as sons and daughters, as heirs in Christ.