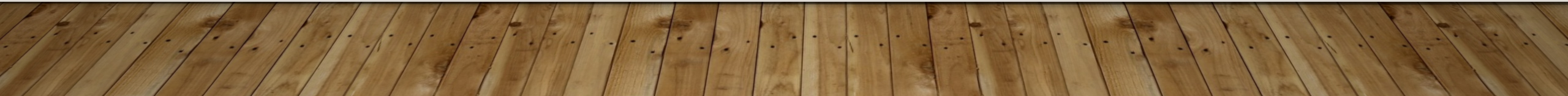




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Min. Marossa Davis



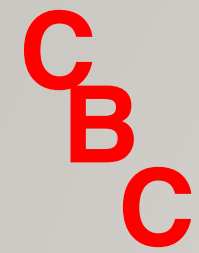


Sunday Church School

JULY 25, 2021

“ Esther Goes Before the King ”

Esther 4: 6 - 5: 2



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“ Esther Goes Before the King ”

Esther 4: 6 - 5: 2 (KJV)

v. 6 “So Hatach went forth to Mordecai unto the street of the city, which was before the king's gate.

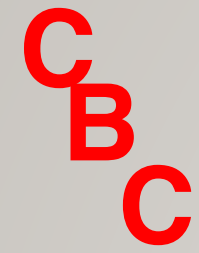
v. 7 And Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him, and of the sum of the money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the Jews, to destroy them.

v. 8 Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them, to shew it unto Esther, and to declare it unto her, and to charge her that she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him, and to make request before him for her people.

v. 9 And Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

v. 10 Again Esther spake unto Hatach, and gave him commandment unto Mordecai.

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“ Esther Goes Before the King ”

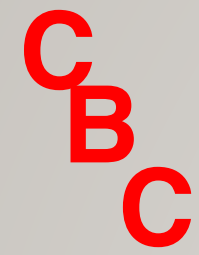
Esther 4: 6 - 5: 2 (KJV)

v. 11 All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days.

v. 12 And they told to Mordecai Esther's words.

v. 13 Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews.

v. 14 For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art



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Esther 4: 6 - 5: 2 (KJV)

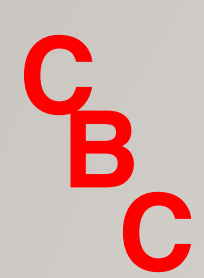
v. 14b come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

v. 15 Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer,

v. 16 Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.

v. 17 So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.

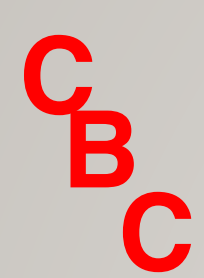
5:1 “Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house.



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v. 5: 2 And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre.”



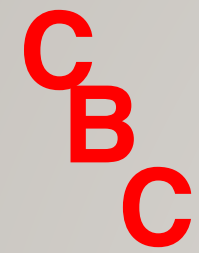
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“ Esther Goes Before the King ”

Esther 4: 6 - 5: 2 (KJV)

The demand had been made, and the edict had been signed. Due to the angry petition made by an evil official by the name of Haman, King Ahasuerus of Persia signed into law a decree that allowed the annihilation of the Jewish people throughout his kingdom. All this stemmed from the fact that a Jewish man, Mordecai, had refused to bow down before Haman, after Haman had received a royal promotion. Since the edict made it legal to hunt the Jews down and kill them, Mordecai took swift action and called on the Queen, his younger cousin, Esther, to intercede for her people.

The Book of Esther recounts an early example of state sponsored genocide that, thankfully, was thwarted. Because of the bravery and faith of two individuals, a diabolically planned and decreed massacre of Jewish people across the Persian Empire never took place.



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TODAY’S AIM

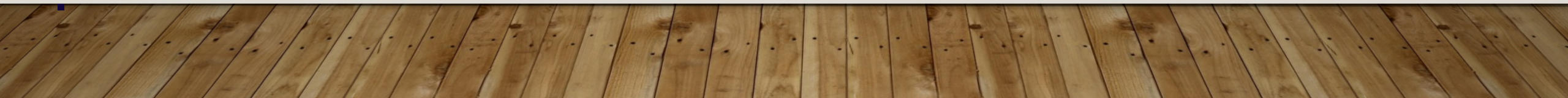
FACTS: to understand that as God’s people, we are sometimes put in desperate situations beyond our control.

PRINCIPLE: to rejoice that distressing situations do not mean hopelessness to those who trust in Christ.

APPLICATION: to remember that when we feel desperate or hopeless, we will never go wrong by turning to the Lord.

LESSON OUTLINE

- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| I. LEARNING OF A DEADLY THREAT | ESTHER 4:6-9 |
| II. WRESTLING WITH PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY | ESTHER 4: 10-17 |
| II. RECEIVING THE KING’S FAVOR | ESTHER 5: 1-2 |



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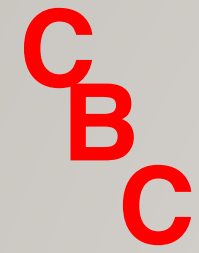
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“ Esther Goes Before the King ”

I. LEARNING OF A DEADLY THREAT

ESTHER 4: 6-9

Esther was a young Jewish woman living in Shushan (Susa), one of the royal cities of the Persian Empire. She had been raised by her much older cousin Mordecai (Esther 2: 5-7) and improbably but providentially had been elevated to become queen to King Ahasuerus (known to history as Xerxes) in place of the deposed first queen (v.17). On Mordecai’s advice, Esther kept her Jewish background hidden (v. 20) The Hebrew name for Esther is Hadassah (Myrtle). Myrtle was one of the choice trees in Israel and represented a prophetic picture of God’s promised blessings. (Isaiah 41:19; 55:13). When King Ahasuerus banished Queen Vashti for ignoring his command to attend an opulent feast, he decreed that all beautiful young maidens be brought to him in order to find a queen to replace her. Esther won the loving kindness (hesed) of the king and



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was crowned as the new queen.

The king installed a wretchedly thin skinned prime minister named Haman (3:1), who quickly developed an intense hatred for Mordecai because of his refusal to show the usual respect of **bowing** in his presence. Learning that this was because of Mordecai’s Jewish identity, Haman decided that the empire needed to be rid of all its Jews. He hatched a plot to have them slaughtered everywhere on a particular date (vs. 4-7) and obtained the king’s approval, which meant the decree was unalterable (vs. 8-15).

When Mordecai learned of the decree, he put on mourning clothes and raised a great cry in the midst of the city of Shushan (4:1-3). News of this soon came to Esther’s attention and she dispatched an attendant to find out the reason for Mordecai’s distress (vs. 4-5). It was a distress she would soon



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be sharing herself.

Esther’s attendant Hatach, found Mordecai in the open in the city square, in front of the palace gate. He would not have been hard to spot, wearing the typical garb of sackcloth dusted with ashes. Mordecai did not hesitate to report all that had recently happened, including the detail of how much money Haman was willing to put into the treasury to fund the slaughter . But, he did not stop with a bare accounting of facts. Here was undoubtedly his only opportunity to do something about the looming disaster.

Mordecai showed that he was not merely reacting to hearsay or rumors. He supplied Hatach with a copy of the decree for the empire wide slaughter issued at Shushan and asked him to show it to Esther. That alone would put her in an awkward position since the decree had been approved by her husband. But what he instructed Hatach to say next would ratchet up the



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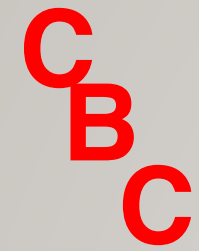
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tension even more.

Mordecai requested that Hatach carefully explain the decree to Esther so that there would be no misunderstanding on her part. He did not want to leave any room for confusion, for he had a difficult task in mind for her. Hatach was to urge Esther in the strongest terms (charge in v. 8 typically carries the force of a **command**, **an order** or a **commission**) to approach the king to beg for mercy (make supplication unto him) for her people.

Two things should be noted here. First, Mordecai did not ask Esther to beg the king to rescind the decree. He understood enough about the laws of the Medes and the Persians to know that a royal decree could not be altered. (cf. Esther 8:8; Dan. 6: 8,12,15. What Mordecai undoubtedly hoped for was that the king would show **mercy** by ordering countermeasures that would prevent the decree from being carried out. And as we see later in the book,

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that is exactly what happened.

Second, Mordecai knew that Esther had kept her Jewish identity hidden; he himself had advised it. So, he knew it would be awkward and risky for her to now reveal that the ones who were earmarked for slaughter were **her people**. Who could say what the king’s reaction would be when he learned that his queen was Jewish and that she had kept this secret from him? Mordecai knew he was not making a light request of his cousin, but the situation demanded it. He was unaware of an additional factor that had made this charge acutely perilous for Esther to carry out.

Esther 4:9 reports that Hatach returned and duly conveyed Mordecai’s message to Esther. The ball was now in her court.

II. WRESTLING WITH PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY ESTHER 4: 10-17

Esther’s response was to send Hatach back to Mordecai with a return



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message. She wanted to make her cousin aware of the severe danger his charge put her in, no doubt in the hope that he would realize he was asking too much of her and find some other way of dealing with the problem. It was a natural response and one that probably any of us would make under the circumstances.

Esther, of course, surely wanted to see her people rescued from slaughter, but she needed Mordecai to be aware of one fact of life in the royal court that everyone connected to it knew about and always kept in mind. No matter who you were, you did not simply waltz into the king’s presence uninvited. You had to be summoned. It was an inflexible rule, and it carried a single penalty for violation: instant death.

This was a standing rule and the penalty was automatic, but the king could grant an exception, if he so desired. If he held out his golden sceptre toward the person who had entered his inner court without authorization, that

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person was assured of royal favor and would live. But this was entirely up to the king’s whim, and few, if any, would dare to count on finding such approval.

Esther certainly could not be confident the king would make an exception for her, for as she had explained in her message, she had not been called into the king’s presence for some thirty days. She could only assume her presence was, for whatever reason, not currently desired and she would not be welcome if she intruded. It was clearly too great a risk. Mordecai would surely understand that.

Hatach dutifully reported Esther’s words to Mordecai. The “ they” in v. 12 probably indicates merely that as a chief attendant, Hatach was important enough to be accompanied by a retinue of servants. In any case, Mordecai was informed of Esther’s dilemma.

Mordecai’s response was certainly not what Esther had been looking for. He did not even address the risk that she had so carefully explained to



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him. Instead, he made clear that she was already in danger no matter what she did and that she should not comfort herself with any illusions that her position would shield her from the disaster looming over all the Jews throughout the empire.

Mordecai’s words on this outcome became even more pointed. If Esther kept quiet in this perilous time, as her reply seemed to indicate she intended to do, deliverance for the Jews would emerge from some other quarter, but she and her relatives would die. Where did Mordecai get this sudden confidence about deliverance from somewhere else? He certainly did not have specific information about other possibilities. Instead, he was expressing his faith that God had unlimited resources and would intervene in some way. He would not let His people be destroyed from the face of the earth.

Mordecai expressed this faith without mentioning God’s name specifically. It has been noted innumerable times that God is not named anywhere in the Book of Esther. Many have seen this as a deficiency and regard the story as a

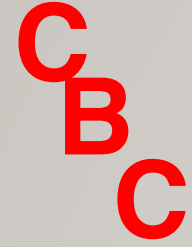
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human-centered tale. But God’s role and presence stands clearly discernible immediately behind the scenes, orchestrating events and providentially working out His will through people and circumstances. That was certainly Mordecai’s understanding. He would have laughed at the notion that God was absent at this time. But Mordecai’s message to Esther was nevertheless urgent. Her silence, her failure to do her part, would ensure her own doom even if God delivered His people by some other means. Mordecai understood that the carrying out of God’s sovereign will does not absolve or negate personal responsibility, it heightens it.

Mordecai wanted Esther to consider one more crucial possibility. She no doubt assumed that she owed her exalted position as queen to her own beauty and the king’s attraction to her. But perhaps she had been elevated to her position for some other reason. What if it was precisely for



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this perilous moment facing her people? Was her present status just for her own benefit, or was it intended to serve a higher purpose- one that she would ignore to her own peril?

To her great credit, Esther fully grasped the point of Malachi’s words and took them to heart. She sent back a reply to her cousin. Her message opened with an urgent request for Mordecai. She wanted him to assemble all the Jews living in Shushan and hold a fast together. They were to fast specifically for her aid, going without food and drink for three days and nights. Esther and her maids would do the same.

The request for corporate fasting likewise reposes the notion of God’s absence from the events of the Book of Esther. The purpose of fasting was to seek God’s favor and intervention, particularly in dire circumstances. Prayer is not specifically mentioned because it was perfectly understood that prayer went hand in hand with fasting.

Esther needed the support of prayer and fasting to give her strength

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“ Esther Goes Before the King ”

and protection for what she was now determined to do. She would go into the king’s presence despite the law against doing so. Her purpose, of course, would be to plead the cause of her people just as Mordecai had requested. Knowing the prayer support she would have as she approached the king, she no longer feared for her own safety. Her final comments have become immortal ever since “ **If I perish, I perish.**” We see this statement as not one of resigned fatalism but as a sign that Esther now was given the grace to look beyond herself and her own concerns. She was carrying out a divine purpose, and she was willing to accept by faith whatever outcome the Lord had in mind for her. Verse 17 notes that Mordecai quickly left the palace gate area and set about to do all that Esther had asked. The exchange of messages was over.

III. RECEIVING THE KING’S FAVOR

ESTHER 5: 1,2

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Three days later, Esther carried out her determination. Attired in her royal robes, she entered the inner court of the palace just across from the king’s hall. The king was seated on his royal throne, facing the entrance. No one could enter the inner court unnoticed. Esther had passed the point of no return; all she could do now was wait for his reaction.

No one knows why the king had gone a month without requesting his queen’s presence , but when he saw her standing in the inner court, he was suddenly glad to see her: “ she obtained favour in his sight.” He held out the golden sceptre, and Esther approached and touched its tip. The immediate danger evaporated, and the blessing of the king’s favor was now the reality she and all the Jews had hoped for.

That favor would continue as succeeding chapters detail how Haman’s plot unraveled and deliverance from the impending genocide was engineered. Through it all, the sure hand of God’s control and working is evident.

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Practical Points

1. Wherever we are, God can use us to help others (Esther 4: 6-7).
2. It is never wrong to urge others to do the right thing (v. 8).
3. God does not ask His people to deny the presence of danger but trust Him in that danger (vs. 9-12).
4. God places each of us in the time and place where we can best accomplish His purposes (vs. 13-24).
5. Believers need to support each other as a family of faith in times of trial (vs. 15-17).
6. God often answers prayers through people who are willing to act boldly in obedience to Him (5: 1-2).

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“ Esther Goes Before the King ” For Further Discussion

1. What practical steps can we take to discover God’s purpose for us in a given situation?
2. What lessons can the story of Esther teach us about the sovereignty and providence of God?
3. How can we maintain faith in the Lord when He is silent?
4. How does Esther’s boldness in coming before King Ahasuerus provide us with an example to follow when facing a difficult or risky task? Any difficult task in your life today?

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