

Esther 4

1 When Mordecai learned all that had been done, Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and he cried out with a loud and bitter cry. **2** He went up to the entrance of the king's gate, for no one was allowed to enter the king's gate clothed in sackcloth. **3** And in every province, wherever the king's command and his decree reached, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting and weeping and lamenting, and many of them lay in sackcloth and ashes.

4 When Esther's young women and her eunuchs came and told her, the queen was deeply distressed. She sent garments to clothe Mordecai, so that he might take off his sackcloth, but he would not accept them. **5** Then Esther called for Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs, who had been appointed to attend her, and ordered him to go to Mordecai to learn what this was and why it was. **6** Hathach went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king's gate, **7** and Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the exact sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries for the destruction of the Jews. **8** Mordecai also gave him a copy of the written decree issued in Susa for their destruction, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her and command her to go to the king to beg his favor and plead with him on behalf of her people. **9** And Hathach went and told Esther what Mordecai had said. **10** Then Esther spoke to Hathach and commanded him to go to Mordecai and say, **11** "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law—to be put to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter so that he may live. But as for me, I have not been called to come in to the king these thirty days."

12 And they told Mordecai what Esther had said. **13** Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, "Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. **14** For if you keep silent

at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" 15 Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, 16 "Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish." 17 Mordecai then went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him.

Context

Alright, so we find ourselves at the crisis point in the story of Esther. Haman just tricked the King to approving of the execution of all the Jews in the Kingdom in just a few days. We see Mordecai, Esther, and the Jews all over the land be greatly distressed. Mordecai in particular, we see especially destitute. He tears his clothes and puts on sackcloth and ashes in mourning, and cries out throughout the city. During this mourning and panic, Esther and Mordecai trade messages getting each other up to speed and trying to figure out what can be done. And out of their conversation comes a plan, a last-resort, shot in the dark, high risk gamble to get the king to change his mind and take back the decree.

Mordecai implores Esther to find audience with the king and plead with him on behalf of her people. Initially, Esther resists, telling Mordecai that anyone who goes to the king inside the inner court without being called is put to death by law, no matter who they are. The only way for them to not be put to death is if the king pardons them on the spot by holding out his golden scepter to them.

But Mordecai, with convicting words, reminds Esther that she, as a Jew, is doomed to death anyway by the decree. Furthermore, he speaks out of his faith in God, saying that there will be relief and deliverance that rises for the Jews somewhere, but if Esther doesn't do all she can to save her people, she will surely perish. And lastly, he tells her, "Who knows, whether you have not come to the kingdom and to the position you have as queen for

such a time as this?”. And Esther’s response, what we’ll focus on today, is one that reveals her faith in God which leads to great bravery and trust.

After Mordecai’s urging, Esther makes up her mind and says, “I will go to the king, though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.” That has to be one of my favorite lines in the Bible. “If I perish, I perish.” It takes great bravery on Esther’s part, to set herself to enter the king’s inner court without being summoned and face death, banking on the king pardoning her with the golden scepter. Perhaps Esther was praying that God would bring the king to pardon her and was holding on to that glimmer of hope. Or perhaps, she had set herself to go even without that hope, because she realized her message is worth more than her life.

I believe that throughout each of our lives, as we walk in faith, God gives us some big moments where we are asked much of. And we can either respond with great bravery and confidence in Him, or be swept away by the worries of the world. Perhaps our responses to these big moments will be what we reflect back on most in heaven, where we look back with great gladness at our faith, or sorrow in our lack of it. We know Esther, in this moment, responded with great bravery, putting her life on the line to save her people, using the positions and the opportunities God gave her to do all she can to do good.

But it isn’t just bravery that made Esther’s response so inspiring. It’s also her devotion and trust in the Lord, rather than herself. In Esther’s reply to Mordecai, she tells him, “Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf. I and my young women will also fast as you do.” And in this reply, we see immediately that Esther knows that it isn’t actually up to her. It isn’t her abilities or her actions that will save her people. It’s the will of the Lord. She is merely a servant of her God, acting in obedience and trusting in His provision. Esther shows great bravery in how she responds to this big moment, in her decision to go to the king, but maybe even more striking is how she shows great devotion in her first reaction being to ask all the Jews to fast. She knows that prayer and fasting will be what fills her with power and authority to walk into the king’s inner court and do the will of the Lord.

As for us today, only God knows when we'll find ourselves being called to answer in faith in these big moments in our lives. We may have many to come, or just a few. But we see in Esther's response that how we respond will likely be determined by how much we trust that the Lord is our source of strength and providence. That our prayer and fasting is what will prepare us for these moments. My hope for us is that we can get a head start, and strengthen our faith day by day by practicing these things, so that we can be ready to rise to the occasion and glorify our God.