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Lesson 4 Esther 4:1-17

Esther 4:1-17 (NASB)

- ¹ When Mordecai learned all that had been done, **he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes,** and went out into the midst of the city and **wailed loudly and bitterly.**
- ² He went as far as the king's gate, for no one was to enter the king's gate clothed in sackcloth.
- ³ In each and every province where the command and decree of the king came, **there was great mourning among the Jews,** with fasting, weeping and wailing; and many lay on sackcloth and ashes.
- ⁴ Then Esther's maidens and her eunuchs came and told her, and the queen **writhed in great anguish.** And she sent garments to clothe Mordecai that he might remove his sackcloth from him, but he did not accept *them*.
- ⁵ Then Esther summoned Hathach from the king's eunuchs, whom the king had appointed to attend her, and ordered him *to go* to Mordecai **to learn what this was and why it was.**
- ⁶ So Hathach went out to Mordecai to the city square in front of the king's gate.
- ⁷ Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the exact amount of money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the destruction of the Jews.
- ⁸ He also gave him a copy of the text of the edict which had been issued in Susa for their destruction, that he might show Esther and inform her, and **to order her to go in to the king to implore his favor and to plead with him for her people.**
- ⁹ Hathach came back and related Mordecai's words to Esther.
- ¹⁰ Then Esther spoke to Hathach and ordered him *to reply* to Mordecai:
- ¹¹ "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that for any man or woman who comes to the king to the inner court **who is not summoned, he has but one law, that he be put to death,** unless the king **holds out to him the golden scepter** so that he may live. **And I have not been summoned** to come to the king for these thirty days."
- ¹² They related Esther's words to Mordecai.
- ¹³ Then Mordecai told *them* to reply to Esther, **"Do not imagine that you in the king's palace can escape any more than all the Jews.**
- ¹⁴ "For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father's house will perish. **And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?"**
- ¹⁵ Then Esther told *them* to reply to Mordecai,
- ¹⁶ "Go, assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa, and fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens also will fast in the same way. **And thus I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish.**"
- ¹⁷ So Mordecai went away and did just as Esther had commanded him.

C. Mordecai mourned (4:1-3)

[4:1-3](#). Whatever had been Mordecai's reasons for not bowing to Haman, he was now in great mourning. His feud with Haman, whether legitimate or not, had caused a great crisis for his whole nation. He feared that God's Chosen People would be destroyed and God's program thwarted. He knew the amount of money Haman had agreed to spend on this vast project as he

had a copy of the edict ([vv. 7-8](#)). Wearing **sackcloth and ashes** and crying publicly signified **mourning** (cf. [Gen. 37:34](#); [Jer. 49:3](#); [Dan. 9:3](#); [Joel 1:13](#); [Jonah 3:6](#)). **Mordecai** was identifying himself to the public as one in great distress. Perhaps he was remorseful for having revealed his nationality ([Es. 3:4](#)) and thus having endangered the lives of thousands of his people. Everywhere **Jews** heard of the edict, and they had the same response. Certainly many Jewish people must have prayed fervently, though the Book of Esther does not mention it. Meanwhile God was working behind the scenes to deliver His people.

III. CALAMITY AVERTED BY ESTHER ([4:4-9:19](#))

Nothing has been said so far in the Book of Esther to suggest Esther and Mordecai were **people of great faith in Yahweh**. But here it is revealed that they **at least believed** that God was concerned for the welfare of His Chosen People. In this climactic section the interworkings of various events reveal God's sovereignty in working on behalf of His own. Though God's name is not mentioned, the abundance of "**happenstances**" surely point to God's control.

A. Communications between Esther and Mordecai ([4:4-17](#))

[4:4-8](#). The action in this section centers around **Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs assigned to Esther**. Though **Esther** had not been in the **presence** of the king for a month ([v. 11](#)), this did not mean that she had fallen from his favor. As his queen she had many luxuries and was waited on by **maids and eunuchs**, who told her about Mordecai's mourning. She assigned **Hathach... to find out** why **Mordecai** was carrying on that way in public places. Esther may have been embarrassed about him. Or perhaps she was concerned for his welfare since she sent out new **clothes for him** to wear so he would not be seen in **sackcloth** and ashes. Esther's unique position in the harem apparently shut her off from normal lines of communication. She did not seem to be aware of **the edict** about the execution of **the Jews**.

In response to Hathach's inquiry to Mordecai **in the open square**, Mordecai **gave him a copy of the edict to show to Esther**. He also told Hathach to tell her all the details of how the edict came about and **to urge her to go** to the king on behalf of **her people** to beg for their lives. The words "**her people**" **revealed** to the eunuch Hathach, if he did not know it before, that Esther **was a Jewess**. Without some reprieve from the king, Esther and Mordecai and all their people would die.

[4:9-11](#). Esther's response to **Mordecai** was not encouraging. Persian monarchs (like those in most ancient nations) were protected against unwanted visitors. **Esther** reminded **Mordecai** that she could not simply enter the king's **inner** chambers unannounced or she might **be put to death**. **The king** had the power to execute anyone who disturbed him without an appointment. **For the king to extend the golden scepter** to someone showed that he approved of the visit and that the person was welcome and not in danger of death (cf. [5:2](#)). Since Esther had not been **summoned** by him for a month she did not know whether his attitude toward her would be favorable.

[4:12-14](#). Mordecai's response to Esther has often been taken as a great confession of faith. Actually, though, **Mordecai** apparently was expecting help from the Persian monarch. However, Mordecai did believe God in some way would protect His people: **deliverance would arise from**

another place if Esther would not approach Xerxes about the Jews' plight. Though Mordecai is not pictured as **a pious man** who was righteous in his dealings before God, he at least had a sense of the **covenantal relationship** between God and Israel. He was aware that the promises to Abraham, Moses, and David would not be fulfilled if the entire nation was wiped out. Therefore he was confident that God would act on their behalf. He hoped that God would work through Esther because of her unique **position**.

Mordecai reminded Esther that if she did not attempt to avert this terrible calamity she would surely die, even though she was a member of the royal household. Whether Haman's power was great enough to reach to the palace and execute the queen is not stated. Mordecai simply planted the idea in Esther's mind that she would die if she did not act. Therefore death by order of the king for entering into his presence would be no worse than waiting and meeting death at the hands of Haman.

4:15-17. Esther understood the situation well. In concluding her **reply to Mordecai** she noted, **If I perish, I perish**. She resolved to carry out the wishes of Mordecai and **go to the king** even if it meant her death. In this section, as elsewhere in the book, Esther and Mordecai **are seen as great patriots** on behalf of the Jewish nation, **but are not presented as righteous people**, like others in the Old Testament who fully trusted the Lord. Nothing is said about Esther praying (though many commentators say that her fasting meant she also prayed). She simply instructed Mordecai to **fast.... for three days** (with **the Jews... in Susa**) as she and her **maids** would also **do**.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

Open it

1. When have the expectations of others overwhelmed or discouraged you?
Being the one person, everyone calls for all things, family, church, when I worked
2. What do you think makes some people brave and others cowardly?
Their nature and how they have been brought up. Some only become brave after a period of cowardice.

Explore it

3. How did Mordecai and the Jews react to the king's edict? ([4:1-3](#))
They were in a time of great mourning following their own rituals, wearing sackcloth and ashes. Every Jew in the kingdom was mourning this way.
4. How did Esther discover the reason behind Mordecai's grief? ([4:5](#))
Ester sent out Hathach and go to Mordecai and learn what was and why it was.
5. In what specific way did Mordecai want Esther to help the Jews? ([4:8](#))
To go to the King and plead for her people.

6. What was the only exception to the king's law about a person entering his inner court uninvited? ([4:11](#))

They would be put to death unless the king holds out to them his golden scepter.

7. What finally convinced Esther to follow Mordecai's advice? ([4:12-14](#))

Mordecai advice at her being a Jew just as much as the rest, and being in the palace was no escape either

8. What warning did Mordecai give Esther if she did not help her people? ([4:14](#))

"For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?"

9. What risk did Esther take to save her people from annihilation? ([4:16](#))

Her own death

Get it

10. What kind of relationship did Esther and Mordecai have?

Was Uncle and niece, almost as strong as father and daughter

11. Where did Esther get her courage?

From God and the other Jews

12. What difference does it make that God is sovereign, as Esther acknowledged?

Since God is sovereign, he knows how to make things happen the way HE wants them to. Even if we don't believe it can.

Apply it

13. What steps can you take to depend on God and Christian friends to help you?

Give more of my worries to God and not try to solve on my own