

## Lesson 12     19 January, 2013

### Esther Pleads for Her People

**Lesson Scope:** [Esther Chapters 4 to 7](#)

#### Lesson Focus

The impetuous decree of Ahasuerus in Esther 3:13-14 deeply perplexed the city of Shushan. Throughout the provinces, the Jewish people expressed their distress with "great mourning ... and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes" (Esther 4:3).

Mordecai understood that the rash decree was directly linked to Haman's hatred for him. He quickly perceived the responsibility that lay upon himself and Esther, and he moved quickly and decisively to alert her to the grave situation (Esther 4:7). He informed her of Haman's intent, provided a copy of the decree, and charged her to "go in unto the king.... and to make request ... for her people" (Esther 4:8). Times of crisis test people's loyalties. Only those who fix their faith on the sovereign God have the discernment and fortitude to sacrifice themselves for the cause of God's kingdom.

The Christian life requires a full surrender to God. We must be willing to sacrifice every human interest for the sake of the Gospel. The challenge for us is to heed the call of Jesus, who said, "Follow thou me."

The sincerity of our commitment cannot be measured only by our apparent contributions to God's work. Some are called to roles of public service, while others serve God through their domestic responsibilities.

Those who compare themselves among themselves or measure themselves by themselves are not wise.

**Lesson Aim:** To see qualities that enable people to fill their roles in God's kingdom.

**Theme Verse:** [Isaiah 12:2](#). Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.

## Lesson Text

### The National Crisis

**Esther 4:1** <sup>1</sup> When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry;

**Esther 4:6-9** <sup>6</sup> So Hatach went forth to Mordecai unto the street of the city, which *was* before the king's gate. <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> And Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

### The Personal Crisis

**Esther 4:10-16** <sup>10</sup> Again Esther spake unto Hatach, and gave him commandment unto Mordecai; <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> And they told to Mordecai Esther's words. <sup>13</sup> Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. <sup>14</sup> 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 come to the kingdom for *such* a time as this? <sup>15</sup> Then Esther bade *them* return Mordecai *this answer*, <sup>16</sup> 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.

### The Crucial Plea

**Esther 5:2** <sup>2</sup> 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.

[Esther 7:3-6](#) <sup>3</sup> Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request: <sup>4</sup> For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage. <sup>5</sup> Then the king Ahasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so? <sup>6</sup> And Esther said, The adversary and enemy *is* this wicked Haman. Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen.

## **Questions for Study**

### **The National Crisis**

1. What do we observe about Mordecai's character from his charge to Esther?
2. Contrast Haman's scheme of destruction (Esther 4:7) with Mordecai's vision of deliverance (Esther 4:14).

### **The Personal Crisis**

3. Why did Mordecai appeal to Esther to approach the king?
4. List present-day resources for effective Christian service.
5. How should God's people respond to alarming and potentially hurtful developments?

### **The Crucial Plea**

6. Why is it crucial that we exemplify devotion and integrity in everyday living?
7. Identify current enemies.
8. How can we maintain fidelity and stimulate it in the rising generation?

## **Analyzing the Passage**

The stage was set for the destruction of the Jewish people. Although the appointed day for the Jews' destruction was several months away, it was imperative to act quickly as Mordecai did. It was customary among oriental peoples to put on sackcloth and ashes to emphasize their distress (4:1, 3).

It seems Esther filled her role in a sheltered environment. She had not known of the new decree and the distress of her people (Esther 4:4, 5). Haman's offer to pay ten thousand talents of silver was insignificant in comparison to the pending economic loss of the Jews' production to the kingdom (Esther 7:4).

Mordecai's faith was the basis of his confidence that God would not fail to provide deliverance (Esther 4:14).

Esther acknowledged the risk of purposely going before the king (Esther 4:11). The thirty-day absence is significant because God may have used this absence to prepare the heart of King Ahasuerus to hold out the golden scepter.

## **Principles and Applications**

### **The National Crisis**

1. The faithful servant carries a burden for the work (Esther 4:1). Mordecai sensed the need for urgency in counteracting Haman's decree. We too must recognize the importance of rising to the challenges of church life today. We must pray for wisdom and strength to resolve any difficulties that arise. "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small" (Proverbs 24:10).

2. The faithful servant contributes readily to the needs of the hour (Esther 4:6-9). "And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the LORD?" (1 Chronicles 29:5). Our Christian brotherhood needs individuals who voluntarily share their talents, insights, and advice. We must appreciate the collective effort to maintain lines of spiritual safety.

### **The Personal Crisis**

3. The faithful servant must view the situations of life realistically (Esther 4:10-12). Esther's initial reaction was cautionary and apprehensive. We believe God holds us responsible for safeguarding our life; therefore, we do not intentionally do what is unreasonable or impractical to achieve. Nevertheless, we do acknowledge that at times it is God's will that we endanger our personal life to secure the safety of others and to honor our commitment to obey God.

4. Faithful servants are challenged to recognize providentially assigned roles in their lives (Esther 4:14). God uses human instrumentality to build His spiritual kingdom. We must seriously consider requests for service that we may be able to do. All of us are called to "maintain good

works for necessary uses" (Titus 3:14), for they make valued contributions to God's work.

5. The faithful servant utilizes spiritual resources in preparing to fulfill his calling (Esther 4:16). The Christian finds the resources of God's grace adequate for every responsibility. We must savor the Word of God and be diligent in prayer and fasting. We also find strength through the intercession and support of faithful brethren.

6. The faithful servant is willing to give his life, if necessary, for the sake of the brethren (Esther 4:16). Esther could not evade the reality that the Jews were doomed by the decree. She understood and decided that her involvement was of great consequence. She pledged to "go in unto the king" even if it cost her life. How frequently do we shrink from lesser challenges to aid and reconcile our brethren, to defend and protect Scriptural church fellowships, and to bring the Gospel to a lost and dying world?

### **The Crucial Plea**

7. The faithful servant takes up specific roles with courage and resolve (Esther 5:1). "If I perish, I perish." Esther had entrusted her care to Almighty God. Yet every step on that weighty day brought her closer to the climactic meeting with the king. Our commitments and testimonies are proven valid when we couple faith with action in fulfilling the Lord's will.

8. The faithful servant enters upon his calling with dignity and propriety (Esther 5:2). God had providentially prepared the way for His purposes to be accomplished. But Esther did not know how God would work. She put on her royal apparel, identifying her as the queen. This authoritative yet unassuming entreaty was recognized favorably by the king. The Biblical principle of distinctive attire coupled with a disposition of godly simplicity is still an influence many carnal men respect.

9. The faithful servant personally identifies with the crisis (Esther 7:3-4). Esther could have initially tried to represent the case without revealing her Jewish identity. But she said, "I and my people." Many times we would like to remain neutral rather than be identified in a conflict. But the spirit of apathy and indifference will certainly separate us from the people of God.

10. The faithful servant is ready to clearly identify the enemy (Esther 7:6). To befriend the enemy will result in death. We develop courage to

stand for truth when we consider the consequences of failing to do so. If we are burdened for the church of tomorrow, we will draw safe lines of separation today. We will ensure that our youth receive conviction-building instruction that will strengthen rather than weaken spiritual church fellowships.

### **Important Teachings**

1. The faithful servant carries a burden for the work (Esther 4:1).
2. The faithful servant contributes readily to the needs of the hour (Esther 4:6-9).
3. The faithful servant must view the situations of life realistically (Esther 4:10-12).
4. Faithful servants are challenged to recognize providentially assigned roles in their lives (Esther 4:14).
5. The faithful servant utilizes spiritual resources in preparing to fulfill his calling (Esther 4:16).
6. The faithful servant is willing to give his life, if necessary, for the sake of the brethren (Esther 4:16).
7. The faithful servant takes up specific roles with courage and resolve (Esther 5:1).
8. The faithful servant enters upon his calling with dignity and propriety (Esther 5:2).
9. The faithful servant personally identifies with the crisis (Esther 7:3, 4).
10. The faithful servant is ready to clearly identify the enemy (Esther 7:6).

### **Answers to Questions**

1. What do we observe about Mordecai's character from his charge to Esther?

Mordecai was not thinking only about himself and Esther. He seems to have been a selfless man with a good understanding of accountability to others and of God's plan for His people.

2. Contrast Haman's scheme of destruction (Esther 4:7) with Mordecai's vision of deliverance (Esther 4:14).

Haman was merely a man. His resources were simply human energy and money. His scheme was totally selfish. Mordecai recognized the

power of God. God is able to overrule the efforts of men. Mordecai's vision was about preserving God's people.

3. Why did Mordecai appeal to Esther to approach the king?

He understood the risks involved and likely felt that she as queen was advantaged because of her relationship with the king. Mordecai challenged Esther to consider that, in this crisis, she was called of God to intercede in behalf of her people. If she neglected her duty, she would likewise perish (Esther 4:14).

4. List present-day resources for effective Christian service.

The Christian is nourished through Bible reading and prayer. At times we incorporate the Biblical concept of fasting. We sense the support of fellow believers. We count on intercessory prayer, material aid, supportive encouragement, and compassionate criticism. We value local collective worship as well as the opportunities of broader fellowship. We are privileged to have a wealth of literature that promotes and helps to develop Scriptural conviction.

5. How should God's people respond to alarming and potentially hurtful developments?

We must not fail to trust the Lord and exercise faith in His promises. We should quickly turn to Him in prayer to discover His will. We purpose to approach each challenge with the Word of God and endeavor to unite our spiritual energies in taking decisive action.

6. Why is it crucial that we exemplify devotion and integrity in everyday living?

We are known by what we are. Our values and convictions manifest themselves in our daily routines. By the grace of God, we establish patterns and practices that display our commitment to God and His Word. This testimony of faithfulness cannot be refuted or gainsaid.

7. Identify current enemies.

The enemy presents situation ethics and a lack of absolutes. God's Word is discredited by many. The actions of man that constitute idolatry are sin. Perhaps our enemy is more subtle than Haman was, but similar attitudes and actions threaten the people of God today.

8. How can we maintain fidelity and stimulate it in the rising generation?

We must courageously stand for truth and join in the laments of God's people when Satan threatens our churches with rebellion and worldliness.

## **Summarizing the Lesson**

God is assigning roles of responsibility yet today. May each of us sense the direction of God's Spirit in determining our contribution. Be it large or be it small, do your work for God!

"So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might" (Judges 5:31).

## **Research Guide**

1. Read Judges 5 for inspiration.
2. Meditate on the sovereign, providential timing of God in these accounts
3. Do word studies on courage, faithfulness, and commitment.