

It's a dangerous thing to stand for your faith, and so often, having an innate sense of whatever "danger" we might face in our culture...we don't. We stay quiet about what we believe, we fly under the radar, we try to blend in with everyone else.

Is this the way Christ has called us to live out our faith? NO! Jesus said we're supposed to live like a lamp on a stand or a City on a hill! We're the light of the world! We're called to stand for our faith, to share the gospel, to spread the good news, to proclaim to the world around us what Jesus has done for us! But so many of us don't.

This isn't a new problem, people have been struggling with this temptation to fly under the radar for a long time. In fact, we've already seen this in Esther.

To get us back up to speed, King Ahasuerus has dethroned Queen Vashti because she didn't want to entertain the king and his buddies at his banquet. So, they gathered a bunch of young virgin girls from the kingdom, brought them to the Palace, pampered them for months, brought them before the king to see who would please the king the most. Esther won the beauty contest. And this young Jewish girl found herself Queen of Persia.

During this process, we see twice in the text that Mordecai, Esther's cousin/father figure, has commanded her...to hide the fact that she's a Jew. He commanded her to hide her lineage, her nationality, her faith.

Esther 2:10

So far, in the book of Esther, faith has been hidden. But as we come to chapter 3, we're going to see a bit of a shift. Mordecai, who told Esther to hide her faith, will make his known. And we'll see some of the consequences for doing so. Hopefully, we'll be encouraged to stand for our faith too.

Esther 3

Let me break this down for you.

The king promoted Haman to 2nd in command in Persia & ordered the people to bow down to him.

Mordecai wouldn't bow (and his stated reason in v.4 was that he was a Jew.) He stood for his faith!

Haman got angry and OVERREACTED big time!

This simple act of defiance by Mordecai led to the central problem of the book! Haman was SO enraged by Mordecai's defiance that he came up with a plot to *exterminate the Jewish people* from the whole empire! (2.9 million sq miles) Men women and children, young and old alike...would be wiped out!

It all started because when everyone else bowed down before Haman, this earthly ruler...Mordecai stood...for his faith.

It is a dangerous thing to stand for your faith...

In this text, we're confronted with some of the things we're afraid might happen if we stand for our faith. And they're very real fears!

Verses 1-3

What's the first thing that happens when Mordecai stood for his faith? in Verse 3 the people noticed! And they asked Mordecai, "Hey, why aren't you following the king's command?"

For some of us, that's enough to keep us from standing for our faith! Maybe you like to fly under the radar? Maybe you prefer to be behind the scenes? You don't want people looking at you funny because they know you're a Christian.

What we see here in Esther, and what we see elsewhere in Scripture is that...

1. People will take notice when you stand for your faith.

It was true in the early church. As the apostles were going around, sharing the good news of the Gospel, they preached with boldness. They stood for what they believed...and people noticed.

Acts 4:13

People will notice when you stand for your faith. It's part of the territory.

The next thing that happens after Mordecai refuses to bow comes in Verses 4-5. Not only did the people notice, but Haman got mad!

Read verse 5

Haman God MAD! And that's an understatement.

In fact, if you pay attention through the chapter, it's almost like we see Haman's anger being stoked and getting bigger.

In v.5 Haman was filled with fury! (that's pretty mad!)

But, look at verse 6!

Haman was so mad he wanted to kill Mordecai, and then he decides that's not enough! He needs to "destroy" ALL of Mordecai's people! (All the Jews in the empire.)

Then you get down to verse 9, and Haman takes his plan to the king, and his anger has grown even more! (Not only does he want to destroy the Jews, he tells the king he'll pay for it! 10,000 talents of silver. - That's about 750,000 lbs of silver!) Haman's anger just keeps festering and getting bigger!

And then in verse 13, the decree goes out throughout the land, "with instruction to *destroy*, to *kill*, and to *annihilate* all the Jews, young and old, women and children..."

Throughout this chapter we see the anger, the fury of Haman ratcheting up! Why? Because Mordecai stood for his faith. Here's the deal, church:

2. Standing for your faith will make some people angry.

Jesus said it would be this way.

Matthew 10:22

It happened to Mordecai, it has happened to me, it'll happen to you. It's part of what comes with the territory when we stand for our faith.

But, it can be worse than anger. In fact as we talked through Verses 6-15 a moment ago, and as Haman's anger ratcheted up, we didn't just see anger in him...you could say we saw his *wrath*.

One guy by the palace gate wouldn't bow down to Haman, and he went from angry to "destroy, kill, and annihilate all of his people and I'll pay for it"! Haman didn't just unleash anger on the people, he unleashed his *wrath* on them!

3. Standing for your faith may attract the wrath of the world.

Scripture Promises us it would be this way.

2 Timothy 3:12

Here's the reality, church. Standing for your faith will mean experiencing the world's wrath. Maybe it'll mean a tumultuous relationship with a relative or a neighbor. It may one day mean you'll lose your job because you refuse to hide your faith. It may mean someone sues you for talking about Jesus. You may one day be caused harm because someone didn't like how you stood for your faith.

Yes, we see it in Esther, and we know it from experience. It's dangerous to stand for our faith. But Mordecai still stood. What about you?

Maybe you're asking, why would I stand for my faith knowing people are going to notice, and they might be angry and they may even want to harm me? WHY?

Well, if we place this story in the context of the whole Bible, here's what we find.

* It is a dangerous thing to stand for your faith...*but it's more dangerous not to.*

Matthew 10:32-33

Yes, it can be uncomfortable, and downright dangerous, in this world, to stand for our faith. But, you know, eternity will last a long time! And if we'll stand for our faith now, no matter what it means...Jesus said he'll acknowledge us before the Father.

If we don't stand, we're denying him, and Jesus says he'll deny us before the Father.

It's dangerous to stand for your faith, but it is SO much more dangerous not to, church! It was true then, and it's true today. So, how do we get there. How do we move past our fear and STAND?!

I think the answer lies in changing our perspective. We can be SO short sighted. We see the potential of discomfort for standing up for our faith, and we cave to it. But, that's not what Mordecai did in Esther 3. It seems that he knew his hope wasn't in this world. It was bigger than that. His hope lie in the God he worshipped. So, he took a stand, and refused to bow though it was uncomfortable in the moment.

If your eyes are just set on this world, and how comfortable the next moment is going to be, you probably won't stand for your faith. BUT, church if you'll set your eyes on things above, if you'll set your eyes on Jesus, if you'll recognize that your hope isn't in this world, it's in an ETERNITY with HIM, then you'll be well on your way to standing up for what you believe in!

| Matthew 6:19–21

What's at stake if we don't stand?

If we won't stand, Jesus says he'll deny us before the Father.

IF we don't stand, the people you love who don't know Christ may never have the opportunity to respond to him in faith.

If we don't stand, we may see a generation rise who do not know God.

The stakes are high, church!

It's a dangerous thing to stand, but far more dangerous not to!