

2.4

GOD SAVED THE QUEEN

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God often works out His will through adverse circumstances.

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will face my circumstances with courageous faith.



FOCUS VERSE: Esther 4:14

And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

LESSON TEXT: Esther 4:4-16



BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Esther 4:4–16

Esther's unlikely rise to queen has almost become a fairy tale enrapturing the hopes and fantasies of many young women and girls throughout the centuries. However, a closer examination of the role reveals a much darker tale. Being queen was not a role of power and romance, which is demonstrated throughout the book. Esther's predecessor, Vashti, had been ousted for simply not coming when called. Furthermore, the queen was only allowed to come when she was called (4:11). The queen was not privy to any political workings of the king's court; Esther's cousin Mordecai and the general public learned of Haman's treachery before Esther did (4:1–8).

Although retrospectively we can identify God's master plan in the selection of Esther as queen, the process for selection was anything but romantic. The candidates did not come voluntarily. Esther and all the other candidates were forced to go to the palace and join the king's harem of women. Qualifications were based strictly and shallowly on physical looks and appearances (1:11; 2:7; 2:15). Esther was one of the "fair young virgins," likely in her mid-teens, while Ahasuerus was an established king—probably twenty to fifty years her elder. The selection process was not quick either. Vashti was deposed in the third year of Ahasuerus' reign (1:3), but Esther was not chosen until the seventh (2:16), meaning Esther could have been held against her will in the harem for up to four years. In addition, she must have faced the religious shame of a young Israelite girl being forced to marry her Gentile enslaver.

These facts give new perspective to Mordecai's observation: "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (4:14). Such a suggestion might have seemed like an insult for all the trauma Esther had suffered. Mordecai was suggesting the possibility of some good and divine providence to be found amid her suffering. Esther's trauma places a new perspective on her response: "If I perish, I perish" (4:16). Esther had already been through so much trauma that death was not a sufficient deterrent. In all her pain, she had undoubtedly been searching for a purpose and meaning for it all, and now she had found it—to be an instrument of salvation for her people.

“WHO KNOWETH WHETHER THOU ART
COME TO THE KINGDOM FOR SUCH A TIME
AS THIS?” (4:14).

DAY 1

Esther 4:4-6

⁴ So Esther's maids and her chamberlains came and told it her. Then was the queen exceedingly grieved; and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him: but he received it not.

⁵ Then called Esther for Hatach, one of the king's chamberlains, whom he had appointed to attend upon her, and gave him a commandment to Mordecai, to know what it was, and why it was.

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

Biblical Insight

Wearing sackcloth—a course, rough, unsightly garment—is commonly seen throughout the Bible to publicly demonstrate grief, which more specifically could indicate mourning, debasement, or repentance. Jacob wore sackcloth to mourn Joseph's supposed death (Genesis 37:34), David and his followers put on sackcloth to mourn for Abner (II Samuel 3:31) and also to repent of David's inappropriate census of Israel (I Chronicles 21:16), and Daniel did so just to humble himself as he prayed (Daniel 9:3). Jesus even referred to the practice (Matthew 11:21). In the story of Esther, Mordecai was publicly symbolizing his state of mourning for Israel's impending doom.

Daily Devotion

A photograph of Monsieur Jerome Barzetti appears in an issue of *Life* magazine dated March 3, 1941. The photo's caption reads: "a Frenchman sheds tears of patriotic grief as the flags of his country's last regiments are exiled to Africa." Monsieur Barzetti wept for more than the loss of the French flags; he wept for France's surrender to Nazi Germany. He wept for the loss of freedom. He wept because the enemy seemed victorious.

Like Mordecai, Monsieur Barzetti wept because of an unknown future for his people. Today nations in our world have surrendered to spiritual darkness. Growing numbers of people have never experienced the freedom that comes through salvation. The future is unknown for many nations.

Upon reflection, do you voice criticisms of your nation more than you weep for your nation? Take time today to pray for your nation and its leaders.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 2

Esther 4:7-9

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.

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.

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

Biblical Insight

Mordecai was more aware of Haman's plans and thus the inner dealings of the king's court than the queen was. Despite being queen, her role in legal and political matters seemed to be very limited. Despite the decree being broadly distributed, Esther was in the palace, but no one thought to tell her because as far as most people knew, the decree did not concern her. Furthermore, Mordecai's esteemed position in the king's gate may have made him aware of these dealings more quickly than the general public.

Daily Devotion

Drafted by Nazi intelligence in 1939, Helmuth James Graf von Moltke read classified accounts of destroyed villages and thousands of executed people. He wrote in 1941, "May I know this and yet sit at my table in my heated flat and have tea? Don't I thereby become guilty too? What shall I say when I am asked: And what did you do during that time?" Choosing to live a life of meaning, von Moltke joined resistance fighters called the Kreisau Circle. Years later, in prison and awaiting his death, he wrote that he had no regrets.

As did Mordecai and Esther, when von Moltke realized lives were in jeopardy, he chose action instead of avoidance. Currently souls are in jeopardy of spending eternity separated from Jesus. Are we sitting in our heated homes, sipping tea while ignoring the world's chaos? Or are we devoting ourselves to fulfilling the Great Commission?

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 3

Esther 4:10-12

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

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.

¹² And they told to Mordecai Esther's words.

Biblical Insight

Esther's lack of political influence—demonstrated by her ignorance of Haman's plot—likely caused her to hesitate. Thus far Esther had only approached the king when she was called, another example of her subservience and lack of influence. She had not been called in thirty days, which likely also caused questions in her mind. She may have wondered if she had fallen out of favor with the king and if her fate would be the same as Vashti's, her predecessor (*Apostolic Study Bible*, note for Esther 4:11).

Daily Devotion

After the death of its founder, Genghis Khan, the Mongol Empire prioritized invading Europe. Desperately attempting to circumvent war, Europe sent Christian missionaries to convince the Mongol clan leaders to convert to Christianity. Surprisingly, the missionaries discovered many Mongol clan leaders were open to Christianity and let churches be built because of the intercession of their Christian wives.

Long before Christian missionaries went to the Mongol Empire, God had positioned these Christian women. God granted them divine favor to prepare the hearts of leaders to receive the gospel in a pagan culture. Like Queen Esther, the Christian wives did not have political influence, but they had something more powerful—divine favor.

If you feel less qualified, less gifted, or less connected to share the gospel, remember, God positioned you in your neighborhood, community, and workplace. Do not hesitate. Do what God has called and equipped you to do.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 4

Esther 4:13-14

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.

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 come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

Biblical Insight

Mordecai had previously instructed Esther to hide her identity as a Jew (Esther 2:10). However, Mordecai later realized Haman's plan would not be limited to those outside the palace, meaning even Esther was not safe. After all, Mordecai himself was the original target of Haman's anger. As Haman attempted to destroy all of Mordecai's family, eventually the connection would be traced to Esther. Furthermore, Esther would have been foolish to think her position as queen gave her immunity; the previous queen had been ousted for even pettier reasons.

Daily Devotion

Alexandre Dumas's classic novel, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, follows Edmond Dantès, an innocent hero who was unjustly accused. Without a trial Dantès was sentenced to a prison situated on a remote island. Dantès spent captivity plotting his revenge on the four people who led to his imprisonment.

After fourteen years, Dantès escaped and became the wealthy, clever Count of Monte Cristo, who fooled everyone who once knew him. Throughout the novel, as Dantès tried to pursue revenge, he grew less forgiving and more ruthless.

Seeking revenge hardens the heart, distorts the mind, and blinds the eyes. Dantès's story could have ended like Haman's story of self-destruction. Instead, Dantès's realization that God had never abandoned him opened his heart to humility, love, and forgiveness.

If someone has hurt you or betrayed you, choose to love and pray for that person. Leave vengeance to God.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 5

Esther 4:15-16

¹⁵ Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer,

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.

Biblical Insight

Ironically, Esther's call for a fast would have been during the time the Jews were celebrating the feast of Passover. The decree had been signed on the thirteenth day of Nisan, the first month of the year (Esther 3:12); Passover began on the fourteenth day of Nisan (Exodus 12:1-6). The Israelites would have learned of their impending doom while celebrating their deliverance from Egypt centuries earlier and would begin fasting and praying for miraculous deliverance not unlike what they experienced through Moses long before (*Apostolic Study Bible*, notes for Esther 3:12 and 4:16).

Daily Devotion

During the last decades leading up to the abolishment of legalized slavery in the 1860s, enslaved Africans met in praise houses or camp meetings where they sang praises to God. These songs became known as spirituals and are one of the most significant forms of American folksongs. Many of the spirituals celebrated freedom and liberty, not just for the soul, but also from slavery. They were expressions of both spiritual devotion and the yearning for freedom from bondage. Specific spirituals known as "jubilees" were joyful celebrations of freedom, yet they were sung by those enslaved.

During the darkest times in life, it is paramount to hold onto hope. For the enslaved Africans, singing brought them hope. For Esther and the Jews, celebrating Passover, praying, and fasting brought them hope.

What helps you hold onto hope during the difficult seasons of life?

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*
