

Esther 4:1-17 – Standing for the Kingdom

TSK, Henry, HebrewLexicon, Geneva, Poole, JFB, Clarke, Barnes, Trapp, Delitzsch, INT, Handfuls, Gill, Psalm 101, Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: When we do our profession of faith it is not the end of a journey; it is the beginning of a long, tiresome, and often treacherous (危险的) journey. **Personal challenges** will come, like a serious sickness or the loss of a loved one. **Kingdom challenges** will come, like the church compromising (妥协) with sin or becoming totalitarian. And sometimes, there will be **personal challenges about kingdom problems**...like what Esther faced. You will remember that as the pagan (异教徒) Haman worked tirelessly to destroy the Jewish people who were in Persia, Esther was personally challenged by the Lord to stand up his kingdom. You will hear about this today.

Our headings are:

The Danger

The Deliberation (谋虑)

The Decision

Or goals are: **That you will learn that those in the kingdom of Christ are expected to fight for the kingdom of Christ.**

The Danger

1 When Mordecai learned all that had happened, he **tore his clothes and put on sackcloth (麻衣) and ashes**, and went out into the midst of the city. **He cried out with a loud and bitter cry.** 2 He went as far as the front of the king's gate, for no one might enter the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. 3 And in every province where the king's command and decree arrived, there was great mourning among the Jews, with **fasting (禁食), weeping, and wailing (哀嚎); and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.**

1. Mordecai learned of the danger that the Jews were in because of the wicked Haman.

Haman manipulated the king so that he condemned (被定罪) all Jews to be executed without trial*审判). Their possessions were to be taken by their executioners (行刑者) and Haman would pay the king 10,000 talents of silver for the loss of taxes he would have received from the Jews if they were alive. It was a perfect plan of a deviant (离经叛道的) mind.

2. What was the Jewish response?

a. Mordecai tore his clothing, fasted, put on sackcloth, placed ashes on his head, and cried aloud to God.

In tearing his clothing he was showing intense sorrow. Fasting showed he wanted to focus on prayer. Sackcloth (made of rough camel's hair) showed he did not care about his personal comfort. Ashes on the head showed he felt like dust and being buried in the earth – an outward picture of inward humility (谦卑). Then he cried aloud to his Savior.

But even in his intense humiliation, he only went as far as the king's gate, not into the king's palace. He was not allowed to go further. Kings never wanted sad people to be around them.

b. The people also fasted, crying, wailing, wearing sackcloth and putting ashes on their heads.

But it was a shame that when Cyrus, the Medo-Persian King, had given the Jews permission to return to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity (被掳) was over many Jews chose to stay in Persia. They had become comfortable among pagans (外邦人), thinking that the pagans would accept them. This was a mistake!

4 So Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her, and the **queen was deeply distressed**. Then she **sent garments to clothe Mordecai and take his sackcloth away from him**, but he would not accept them.

3. What was Esther's response to the terror facing the Jews?

a. She showed she understood the danger God's people were in. She showed empathy.
Romans 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

b. But she tried to soothe Mordecai's sorrow by giving him better clothing. But he refused it.

He wanted to keep the pictures of humiliation (sackcloth and ashes) as he waited for his prayers to be answered.

Esther was struggling in her soul about standing up for the kingdom, so she tried to throw a blanket over the problem.

4. Lessons:

a. There are always those who are bent on destroying the church of Christ. They are doing what their father, the Devil, wants. It is naïve not to think so. It might be Canadian to be polite and think good of evil men, but it is Christian to judge the danger around so you can respond properly. Notice how homosexuals have moved from wanting to be tolerated, to be accepted, and now, be supported! Some are now openly acknowledging that their goal is to nullify (抵消) the effects of the church.

b. Learning to fast, pray, and work for the saints (圣徒) is a normal Christian activity. You are bound to do these things for the church. But, as Mordecai, **work within the law.** (So don't blow up abortions clinics 堕胎诊所, though these murder centers are protected and promoted by the civil authorities. Work within the permissible bounds.

c. Danger, sin, and sadness can't be covered by nice clothing. You have to fight. Don't put a Band-Aid on gangrene 坏蛆. This is a **cosmic battle for world dominion.** You heard this recently from Pastor Zekveld. Don't be a silent bystander 旁观者.

d. Leaders of this world often have no lasting interest in caring about the welfare福祉, 福利 of the abused Christian; they care for their own welfare. They make sure they have cushy轻松的 jobs after they are out of office. How different they are from the King of kings! He is always ready to receive the broken hearted and the spiritual captive to set them free.

The Deliberations

5 Then Esther called Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs (太监) whom he had appointed to attend her, and she gave him a command concerning Mordecai, **to learn what and why this was.** 6 So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the city square that was in front of the king's gate.

1. Esther took the time to investigate the details of the execution order; she refused to be impulsive (冲动的).

You know how there are false stories on Facebook? (Did you hear that Clint Eastwood died this past week?) Esther wanted to learn the truth.

7 And Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries to destroy the Jews. 8 He also gave him a copy of the written decree for their destruction, which was given at Shushan, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her, and that he might command her **to go in to the king to make supplication to him and plead before him for her people.** 9 So Hathach returned and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

2. Mordecai then sent Esther all the information she need: Haman manipulated (操纵) the king in order to get him to sign a decree (法令) to destroy all Jewish people.

Mordecai even sent a copy of the written decree to Esther and told her about the large amount of money Haman promised the king. Mordecai did this with the hope that she would be motivated

to go to the king and make supplication to save the Jews and exposing Haman's wickedness.

10 Then Esther spoke to Hathach, and gave him a command for Mordecai: 11 "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that any man or woman who goes into the inner court to the king, who has not been called, he has but one law: put all to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter, that he may live. **Yet I myself have not been called to go in to the king these thirty days.**" 12 So they told Mordecai Esther's words.

3. Then Esther responded (though a messenger – so you see how all were working together) to Mordecai by saying that it would be very difficult, even dangerous, to go to the king.

She argued that she could be killed if she tried in an impromptu (无准备的) way to get to see the king. She wasn't against helping, but there was mortal danger to her life. It was even more difficult and dangerous to try to approach the king because she was somewhat estranged (被疏远的) from the king who had not sent for her for 30 days.

13 And Mordecai told them to answer Esther: "**Do not think in your heart that you will escape** in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews. 14 "For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and **deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place**, but you and your father's house will perish (灭亡). Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

4. Then Mordecai responded to Esther's arguments:

- a. He said that **possible death from the king was better than certain death** from the executioners axe.
- b. He said that **God would still deliver his people, even if she didn't help.**
- c. He said that **God may have providentially placed her where she was** to help at that time. (God loved his people so he made Esther queen to save them.) Mordecai was pointing Esther to her Savior...a Savior who was calling her to risk her life for the kingdom.

5. Lessons:

a. Learn to be calculating慎重的, in a good sense判断力强, of what the Christian response ought to be to challenges we face. Don't repeat what others repeat. Don't go with the mob. Don't act impulsively. **Get the facts. Plan the action.**

b. Learn to use whatever position into which God has providentially placed you to advance the cause of Christ's kingdom. If you have boldness, deliver tracts (福音单张) to people on the streets. If you have the gift of speech, debate others about the Scriptures. If you have the gift of hospitality (热情好客), invite others to your home so they can see Christian living. **The kingdom will expand with or without you (no one is indispensable), but God has given you the honor to play your part.** How can anyone be silent when the church is under such severe threat? **Trapp: ...if ever a man will speak, let him do it when the enemies are ready to devour the Church...**

Psalms 137:5 If I forget you, O Jerusalem, Let my right hand forget its skill! 6 If I do not remember you, Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth — If I do not exalt Jerusalem Above my chief joy.

c. There is often a price to pay for standing up for Jesus. You might be denied a promotion, lose a job, lose a friendship, and even face death in some countries. But we are not islands to ourselves. We live an inter-connected life.

d. Thank God that our heavenly Father delights to hear our prayer always.

John 4:23 "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.

There was only a cloth veil in the Old Testament, but now the veil was torn in two by Jesus. We always have access to him.

The Decision

15 Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai: 16 "Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. **And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!**" 17 So Mordecai went his way and did according to all that Esther commanded him.

1. After all considerations, including her initial reluctance (不情愿) to help, Esther decided to help save the church of Jesus.

Esther's response was **no longer in her self-interests but she wanted to act for the good of the kingdom.**

But know that she was not looking to the king for remedy (救治). She was looking the Lord. She knew that **God could change the king's heart.** The king was an instrument to be used by God.

2. Esther did not act alone in her fight to save the kingdom.

She urged Mordecai to get the Jews together so they could fast and pray for her labors. And this was not a simple fast. This was for 3 days and 3 nights! I suspect this was a subtle Trinitarian (三位一体教义的) statement, intentionally or unintentionally. **Even Esther's maids were involved in the fast.**

3. Then Esther committed herself to the Lord: If she died, she died.

4. Mordecai and the people did as Esther commanded. They humbled themselves and fasted and prayed for 3 days and 3 nights.

5. Lessons:

a. When you have to decide about taking a job, whom you marry, or where you live, consider the kingdom of Jesus, not your own self-interest. You are a part of his kingdom. He died for you so you could be saved. You belong to him. Be ready to give up a lucrative (赚钱的) job, lose some friends, or choose a different career in order to serve the kingdom.

b. There are times, as in which we are today, where you have to act. The church is facing an existential threat from the outside, from civil authorities, from false religions, and from society as a whole. The church is facing threats from within as well. You must throw down the gauntlet (击剑手套).

c. Success, as the world describes it, is not the measure of success as God defines it. You must be faithful to the task. If you die fighting for the kingdom, it means that was the task God had for you and you were successful.

Conclusion:

The Jews in Persia were in great danger of being completely wiped out. Queen Esther took time to consider the matter, and when combined with a rebuke from her uncle, she made the decision to act to serve the Kingdom of Jesus.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. How much are you willing to give up for the kingdom? Is missing a meal a big deal to you? What about having to change your job? How hard are you willing to work for the kingdom? How much sacrifice are you willing to make?

2. Here is the truth: Jesus died to redeem (救赎) his bride, and she will expand and be filled with

glory, with or without you. But God is pleased to use you to advance his kingdom's cause. Are you willing to be used?

3. God will help you if you are willing. He will equip you with everything you need through his Word and his Holy Spirit. Who knows what great things he will do through you!

Finally, if you are not for Christ, you are against him. If you are against him, he will destroy you in hell forever. If you don't want him to destroy you forever, ask him to change your heart and adopt you as his child. He will do as you ask. He said so.