

And who knows but that you
have come to your royal
position for such a time as this?

Esther 4:14

Chapter Three

IF I PERISH, I PERISH

Read: Esther 3-4 & 2 Samuel 10



When Jesus takes the lead, He takes us on a journey through rough terrain and barren land. He leads us to, and through the heart of a storm before He safely leads us out. Why? Because we'll never be complete without the trying of our faith. And so, we're brought down to our knees before we're lifted back up.

We see this throughout scripture as faith is refined through the fire of testing. Joseph is sold into slavery by his brothers. David is relentlessly chased down by Saul. Abraham is asked to sacrifice Isaac. Paul is beaten, tortured, imprisoned, and blind, all for the sake of the gospel.

At the center of each one of their lives, there's one thing that stands out more than anything else. One thing sets them apart from the others. One thing shines bright: which is the simple fact that they lived in obedience to their faith.

YOU'RE HERE TO GLORIFY GOD

If you remember the story of Esther, you might remember this verse from Chapter four:

For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this? (Esther 4:4, KJV)

These are the words of Mordecai, a father figure to his cousin Esther, both of whom were Jews.

The Bible tells us that he took Esther in and raised her as his own daughter when her parents died. After some time, Esther was taken to the king's palace in Shushan, where she competed in a beauty contest of sorts. The king was in search of a new queen, and so she spent several months in a harem receiving beauty treatments under the care of a eunuch. In the tenth month, she was taken to the king, at which time she won both his favor and the crown.

While Esther was in the palace, a battle ensued between her cousin Mordecai and Haman, one of the highest officials in the palace. The Bible says,

Having learned who Mordecai's people were, he [Haman] scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai. Instead, Haman looked for a way to



destroy all Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes. (Esther 3:6)

This is why Mordecai was pleading with Esther. She wasn't at the palace for any other reason than to glorify God, and Mordecai knew that. He pointed out her divine purpose by saying, "And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" In other words, why else would you be there?

We tend to overlook that, when we're caught up in the hoopla of everyday life. We seem to forget that there's a reason we're here. It's not just a feel-good journey through faith. There's a point to all of this, and so we need to be ready to answer His call.

If we don't, help will surely arise from another place, but in the process, we miss out on the blessings that come to those who courageously allow God to use them.

**WE OFTEN DON'T REALIZE THAT WHERE
GOD PUTS US IS THE VERY PLACE WE
NEED TO BE TO RECEIVE WHAT HE
WANTS TO GIVE US.**

– PRISCILLA SHIRER

Esther had a good reason to be hesitant that day. She knew that anyone who went to see the king without an invitation was putting their life at risk. In fact, according to the ancient historian Josephus, the king had made a law that when he sat upon his throne, none of his people should approach him unless they were called. Men with axes in their hands stood around his throne in order to punish any

that approached him without being called. (Jewish Antiquities, Book 11, Chapter 6, 205)

All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that they be put to death unless the king extends the gold scepter to them and spares their lives. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king. (Esther 4:11)

Being the wife of a king wasn't an exemption from the law. Esther was just as vulnerable as anyone else who dared to enter the room, but here's the thing that made her stand out—she chose to suffer affliction with the people of God.

Most of us aren't like Esther. We're not living in a palace wearing a crown, and we're not facing the annihilation of our people. Even so, every life comes with own set of challenges, and with those challenges come opportunities to glorify God. Who knows, maybe you're in the position you're in, for such a time as this. Maybe you've been hand-picked by God to face that one thing you fear. How will you answer that call?

“Fear is often our natural response. We don't have to think of all our reasons to be afraid; fear comes unbidden. But being strong and courageous doesn't come naturally. Often, we have to think through different reasons why we ought to overcome our fears with courage. God calls us to take courage because it doesn't just come naturally; we have to fight for it. Confronted with fears on every side and even from within, courage must be seized”. – Jon Bloom, DesiringGod.org

We never know how things will turn out. We can guess what we think might take place, but in the end only God knows. And so, when we put fear aside to take that first step, we're walking in faith.

TO MISS A KINGDOM ASSIGNMENT
BECAUSE WE'VE BECOME TOO
CAUGHT UP IN OUR PERSONAL KINGDOM
IS ONE OF THE GREATEST TRAGEDIES
WE COULD EVER FACE.

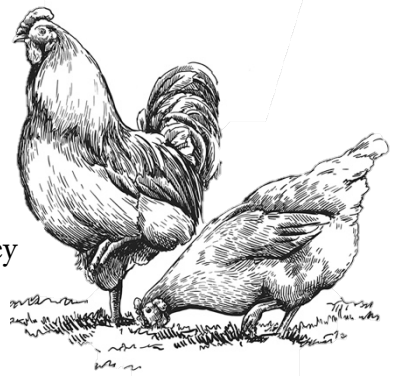
– DR. TONY EVANS

THE FEAR OF REJECTION

If you've ever apologized to a person after a disagreement, you might be familiar with that feeling of apprehension. That worrisome nagging inside you that says, "this might not go well," or "you might be rejected." In some cases, it doesn't go well. People are people, and they'll do what they do, but that should never stop us from doing what's right.

In the same way, you might have a fear of speaking up and sharing your faith. What if they laugh at me? What if they reject me? What if it ruins our friendship?

The fear of rejection is common, and in many cases, it prevents us from moving forward in life. As a result, we don't resolve conflicts, we don't share our faith, we don't speak up



for what's right... We think we're afraid of rejection, but what we're really afraid of is pain. That somehow, we'll be psychologically damaged and unable to heal.

We need to change that way of thinking by reminding ourselves that it's okay to feel pain. It's okay to feel sorrow, and in fact is a natural part of growing in the likeness of Christ.

Jesus said,

*If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.
(John 15:18)*

In 2 Samuel Chapter 10, we're told that after the king of the Ammonites died, David reached out to his son.

"I'll show him some kindness," he said, "in the same way his father showed kindness to me."

And so, David sent his men to the land of the Ammonites to express his sympathy to the king. It didn't go well. Suspicious of David's intentions, the king responded with violence. We read,

Hanun seized David's envoys, shaved off half of each man's beard, cut off their garments at the buttocks, and sent them away. (2 Samuel 10:14)

Humiliated, the messengers returned to David, who told them to stay in Jericho until their beards grew back in. Unfortunately, however, that wasn't the end of it. When the Ammonites realized they insulted David, they pushed all the more, gathering thousands of men for a battle. On hearing this, David sent Joab out with the entire army of fighting men. (v. 7)

WE NEED TO REACH OUT

What started out as an act of kindness, turned into a battle between Israel and Ammonites. Surrounded by armies both in front and behind them, Joab divided the troops into two groups. Putting one group under the command of his brother, Joab instructed him:

If the Arameans are too strong for me, then you are to come to my rescue; but if the Ammonites are too strong for you, then I will come to rescue you. (2 Samuel 10:11)

DID YOU KNOW

FIGHTING BACK-TO-BACK WAS COMMON IN ANCIENT WARFARE, AS IT GAVE THE SOLDIERS AN OPPORTUNITY TO WATCH THE ENEMY FROM ALL SIDES. IT'S ALSO WHERE THE PHRASE, "I'VE GOT YOUR BACK," STEMS FROM.

Joab's strategy illustrates the importance of supporting our brothers and sisters in Christ. It reminds us that:

- a) We are not fighting alone
- b) We need to be there for each other
- c) Sometimes we need to reach out

We're all part of one body. When one part suffers, we all suffer, which is why it's important to have each other's back. To pray for each other. To comfort one another. To spur each other on. Some days we need to pick up the phone and ask somebody to pray. Whether that's your pastor, your husband, your friend, or your family, you need the strength of the body behind you.

“God urges us not only to pray and commit our burdens to Him, but to seek out others who will help us carry our burdens by their prayers”. —Billy Graham

THE LORD WILL DO WHAT IS RIGHT

Joab was not a perfect man. He was a loyal to David, and yet at times he disobeyed the king's orders. Even so, we can learn from him by examining the approach he took before stepping into the battle,

Be strong and let us fight bravely for our people and the cities of our God. The LORD will do what is good in his sight. (1 Samuel 10:12)

As I read those words, *The Lord will do what is good in his sight*, I was reminded of Esther, and how she trusted the Lord to do what was right. Anytime we step out of our comfort zone and into the battlefield we're taking a chance. A chance that we might get rejected, wounded, persecuted, or shot down. We put ourselves out there for the sake of our faith. We stand up to injustice to protect those who can't. We make amends to illustrate the love and forgiveness of God. We do our best, and trust God with the rest.

What Jesus is telling us here is to do the right thing regardless of what it might cost.

A REFLECTION OF CHRIST

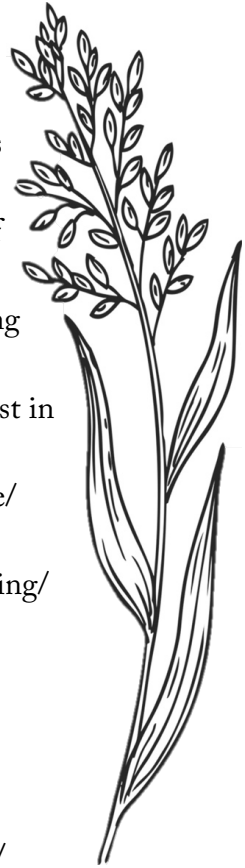
Open your Bible to Esther Chapter 3 and look at verse 12. Notice the date there? It's the 13th day of the first month. Why is that significant? Because, according to the Book of Numbers, it is the day before The Passover,

*On the fourteenth day of the first month the LORD's
Passover is to be held. (Numbers 28:16)*

As we look to the New Testament, we see that Jesus was crucified on Passover. And what happened just before He was crucified? We're told that Judas went to the chief priests with a plot to betray Jesus. There's a parallel here between the two timelines as both take place during Passover week.

In addition to that, we see several reflections of Christ in the life of Esther:

- She was willing to lay down her life for her people/
Jesus laid down His life for all mankind
- She was a mediator between her people and the king/
Jesus is a mediator between God and man
- Because of her sacrifice the enemy was defeated/
Jesus defeated Satan when He rose from the dead
- Her people were saved from death/
Jesus brought salvation to the world
- She fasted for three days before going to the king/
Jesus rose from the dead three days after He was crucified



DID YOU KNOW

OUT OF THE 66 BOOKS IN THE BIBLE, ONLY
2 OF THEM ARE NAMED AFTER WOMEN, ESTHER
BEING ONE OF THEM.

Like Jesus, who was willing to give up His life, Esther was ready to die for her people, fulfilling the mission for which she was called. Esther teaches us that courage begins by making a choice. A decision to lay down our lives and to pick our cross. A willingness to say, “Yes,” to God.

PAUSE REFLECT

Fill in the spaces:

Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: “Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and _____
_____. Do not eat or drink for three days,
night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do.
When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it
is against the law. And _____
_____.” (Esther 4:15-16)

In Luke 9:23 Jesus said, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me." What do you think the words "take up your cross" mean?

James 1:2-4 talks about the testing of our faith. What attitude are we to have regarding the trials we face?

According to that same verse in James, what does the testing of our faith produce?

According to 1 Peter 1:7, what do our trials prove?

What does Isaiah 53:3 say about Jesus? Write the verse out here:

What does Jesus say about fear in Matthew 10:28? Write the verse out here:



Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point.

- C.S. Lewis