



Esther's Act of Courage

Esther Chapter 5

A DISPLAY OF COURAGE (VERSES 1-4)

The hum of a bee brings back vivid memories of a day bathed in sunshine and the sweet taste of vanilla ice cream. It was picture perfect until a sudden sting brought me to tears. I'll never forget the horrifying sound of buzzing inside my ear, and the throbbing pain that followed suit. I was four years old, but I remember the pain like it was yesterday.

Ever since that day, the mere hint of a buzz sends me straight into panic mode. All I want to do is run, and for several years I did.

Once I had children, I quickly realized that running was no longer an option. As a mother, it was my mission to do all that I could to protect them. Facing my fear wasn't easy, but even so, I found myself in the backseat of our car with the baby, gently guiding a buzzing visitor back to the open window and out of our car.

My fears are trivial compared to the profound courage displayed by Esther. Although our stories are wildly different, we're woven together with the same golden threads of love and faith.

In verses 1-4, we witness a display of courage that leaves me in awe. Esther, dressed in her royal robes, approached the king without being

summoned. As I mentioned in the last chapter, this was incredibly dangerous and could have been fateful for Esther. Instead of letting her fear control her, however, she was led by a deep love for her people, and a desire to walk in God's will. With a bravery rooted in love and devotion, Esther's act of courage reminds us that God will be guiding our steps and providing the wisdom and strength that we need.

Did you know?

In Persian culture, extending the golden scepter was a sign of favor or clemency. When the king extended his scepter to Esther, it was a sign that he was sparing her life and was willing to hear her request.

Esther approached gently, inviting the king and Haman to a banquet she had prepared. I see here not just bravery, but wisdom, grace, and patience. Notice that facing our fears doesn't always mean charging at them head-on. Sometimes, it involves a quiet, strategic invitation.

God often calls us to take risks for His sake. When that time comes, may we, like Esther, step out in faith, clothed in the spiritual armor of God.

THE POWER OF PATIENCE (VERSES 5-8)

I lost track of my husband at the mall the other day. Back in the day, losing track of a shopping buddy would result in a time-consuming and frustrating search. I know this full well because it happened to us more than once. We'd agree to meet somewhere at a certain time

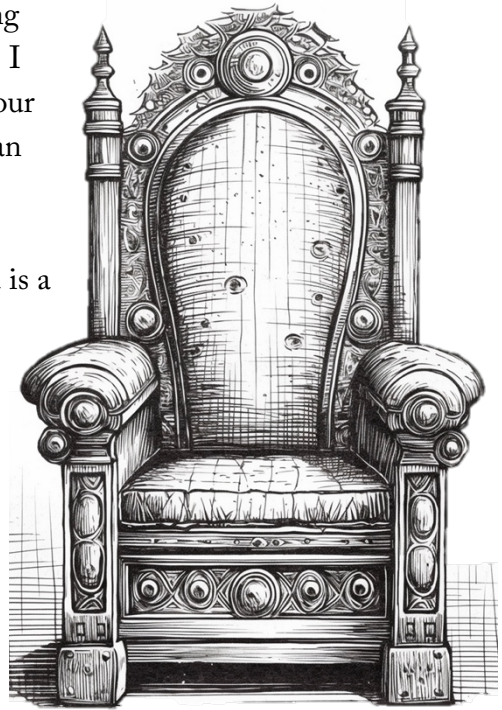
and somehow our wires would cross. He'd be at one end of the mall while I impatiently stood at the other looking down at my watch in utter frustration.

I realized something about waiting today. It can bring out the ugly in us. I guess that's where the term "trying your patience" comes from. But while it can bring out the worst in us, it can also bring out the best.

In the same way, waiting on God is a test of our patience, it can also reveal our faithfulness. It's not that God doesn't hear our prayers on the first day, but rather there's much to be gained by patiently waiting. We see this faithfulness throughout scripture as men like Daniel, David, Abraham, Moses, and Joseph waited on God, and here we see it with Esther. She knew where she stood. She knew she was helpless without the strength and the power of God. She knew that God went before her—to face her enemies and to fight the battle ahead. And, because she knew that, Esther could rest in His wisdom and timing.

Esther doesn't immediately make her request known to the king. Instead, she invites him and Haman to a banquet, only to invite them to another one the next day. She's exercising patience and wisdom, biding her time until the right moment.

As we journey through life, it's easy to rush through decisions or take impulsive actions. But here, Esther reminds to wait on God's timing. As it says in Ecclesiastes 3:1,



There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.

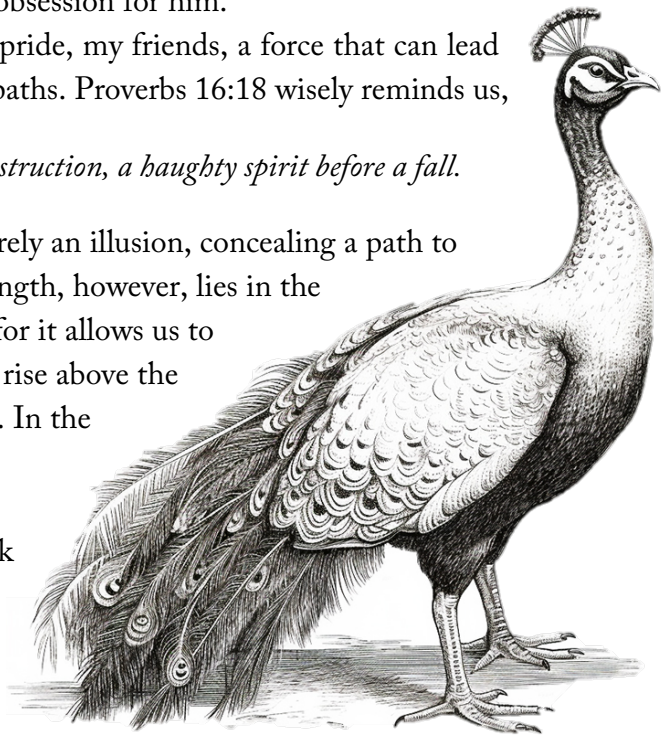
THE FULLNESS OF HAMAN'S PRIDE (VERSES 9-14)

This chapter concludes with a spotlight on the fullness of Haman's pride. At this point in the story, Haman was at the top of the world. He had a position of authority, he had connections with the King and the Queen, and he had riches. He was proud of the fact that he was the only man invited to the banquet other than the King himself. His pride, however, was a thorn in his flesh. He couldn't enjoy what he had as long as Mordecai refused to bow down to him. He had everything a man could want, but the one thing he couldn't have, became a consuming obsession for him.

Ah, the power of pride, my friends, a force that can lead us down treacherous paths. Proverbs 16:18 wisely reminds us,

Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

Pride's strength is merely an illusion, concealing a path to destruction. True strength, however, lies in the embrace of humility, for it allows us to grow, to learn, and to rise above the constraints of our ego. In the absence of pride, we discover freedom, authenticity, and bask in the radiant light of God's transformative grace.



What was the king's response when he saw Esther enter the inner court?

What was Esther's first request of the king?

What did the king offer Esther at the banquet?

What was her request that first night?

In this chapter, we see that Haman puffed up with pride. What was he boasting about?

What was the one thing that brought down Haman's spirit?

What did Haman's wife and friends advise him to do about Mordecai?

In what ways does the role of the gallows in Esther's story echo the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on the cross?

How tall were the gallows (the pole) in feet?

Did you know?

The Hebrew word for gallows used in the story of Esther is 'etz,' which interestingly translates to 'wood' or 'tree.' This linguistic connection draws a remarkable parallel to the crucifixion of Jesus and His triumph over the enemy.

AS WE CLOSE THIS CHAPTER

Let's stop to reflect on these truths. Like Esther, may we step out in courage, trusting in God as we face our own challenges. Let's be patient, knowing that God's timing is perfect. And lastly, let's guard our hearts against pride, choosing instead the path of humility and respect.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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What was the king's response when he saw Esther enter the inner court?

When King Xerxes saw Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her. He extended to her the golden scepter in his hand (Esther 5:2).

What was Esther's first request of the king?

Esther's first request to the king was that he and Haman come to a banquet she had prepared that day (Esther 5:4).

What did the king offer Esther at the banquet?

At the banquet, the king asked Esther what her wish was, offering her up to half his kingdom (Esther 5:6).

What was her request that first night?

Her request that first night was for the king and Haman to attend another banquet she would prepare the following day. Then she promised to answer the king's question about her request (Esther 5:8).

In this chapter, we see that Haman puffed up with pride. What was he boasting about?

Haman was boasting about his vast wealth, his many sons, all the ways the king had honored him, and his elevated status above the other nobles and officials. He also boasted that Queen Esther invited no one but him to accompany the king to the banquet she prepared (Esther 5:11-12).

What was the one thing that brought down Haman's spirit?

The fact that Mordecai refused to kneel down and pay honor to him.

What did Haman's wife and friends advise him to do about Mordecai?

Haman's wife, Zeresh, and all his friends suggested he should have a pole set up, standing seventy-five feet high, and in the morning ask the king to have Mordecai impaled on it. Then he could go to the banquet with the king in good spirits (Esther 5:14).

How tall were the gallows (the pole) in feet?

The pole (or gallows) on which Haman planned to impale Mordecai was to be seventy-five feet high.

In what ways does the role of the gallows in Esther's story echo the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on the cross?

The role of the gallows in Esther's story has a symbolic echo in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Haman built the gallows for Mordecai, but in a twist of divine justice, he himself was executed on them (Esther 7:10). This parallels the cross of Jesus, where the device intended for his execution became the instrument of salvation for humanity. The gallows intended for Mordecai's death became the means by which the Jews were saved from Haman's plot, just as the cross, originally a symbol of death and shame, became the symbol of salvation and life through Jesus Christ.