

Esther 4 Vs1-17

As our time came to a close last week you recall that it was with Haman and the king sitting down to drink, but the city of Shushan was confused and perplexed. They'd just received an edict with the king's seal on it that ordered the systematic destruction of the entire nation of the Jews on the 13th day of the 12th month of the year. They didn't get it, it didn't seem right that out of nowhere after all these years, there would just be this sudden act of genocide for no apparent reason. But you remember the deal, Haman had been promoted to the highest office in the empire directly under the king, and the king had issued orders that everyone was to bow in his presence. And whether or not the fact that Haman was an Agagite (the sworn/unending enemy of the Jews) had anything to do with it we don't know, but Mordecai refused to bow, or show respect in his presence, and man that got under Haman's skin. So having discovered the Mordecai was a Jew Haman set out not only to do him in but every Jew along with him as well. He went to the king and filled him full of ½ truths (otherwise known as lies) and said, "King, there's a group of people in your empire who have different laws than we do, and because of that they don't keep the king's laws. So it's not fitting that they should remain, so if it's alright with you how about we issue a decree that they be destroyed and I'll foot the bill to the tune of \$40 million?" and So the king with out doing any research into the situation, not having a clue who Haman was speaking of *personally*, (because it included the king's wife), or the gravity, and the scale of the operation he was proposing *specifically* he says, "Hey, if there's a group of people out there who won't obey the law, than do what you need to do." Haman devised these letters of destruction and look at Vs 13 of Ch 3 (read thru Vs 15).

What kind of a man on the basis of another man's disrespect desires to destroy an entire nation of people? Haman had some real problems, but you remember in many ways he typifies our flesh, he was an Amalekite and if we don't deal *with*, and do *in* our flesh, the flesh has no problem dealing *with* and doing *us* in. But we have here just a little bit of insight into Haman's character, cold, uncaring, cruel, prideful, hateful, deceitful, murderous and full of self.

The bible tells us, "*When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; But when a wicked man rules, the people groan.*" Prov 29:2 and Such is definitely the case as we enter into Esther Ch 4, the people are groaning.

Vs 1-3

What's missing here? We see them mourning, fasting weeping and wailing, they're laying in sackcloth and ashes, but there's absolutely no call to what? To prayer, they're mourning and fasting, but we don't read of them praying, now some people choose to see these things as synonymous, that if they're weeping and fasting that the given is that they're praying, it's part of the deal. And that may be, but the fact of the matter is that in the scripture itself there's no mention of them praying, calling, or crying out to God whatsoever. And I believe there's a reason for that, we've said it a few times in this book and will probably continue to highlight it throughout the book, they're a backslidden people. Not a God forsaken people, but they're not where God desires them to be, God desires that they be in Jerusalem, they didn't return there when they were released, they stayed in the comfort zone of compromise.

And the application here is that it's difficult to really seek the Lord, and truly cry out *to* the Lord when you know you're not *where* the Lord would have you to be. It's difficult to try and relate to the Lord in an intimate way when you know your life and your walk is in compromise.

Now having said that I repeat that that's an application we can glean, were they praying? I don't know, but the point is well received, when you're out of *sync* with God it's difficult to intimately *seek* God.

Notice in Vs 2 that Mordecai only went as far as the king's gate, the Persian kings liked to live in a fantasy world, meaning that anyone mourning, or sorrowing, anyone with a real problem wasn't allowed into their presence. Remember that's why Nehemiah stated that when the king noticed he had sorrow of heart he said that he became dreadfully afraid. You could receive capital punishment for causing the king to be bummed out, to enter his presence in anything but an outrageously good mood. He didn't want to be acquainted with your griefs, or your sorrows. But thank God our King (Jesus) couldn't be more opposite than that, Isaiah tells us regarding Jesus that He would be, "...*A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.*" Isa 53:3 and So not only does He not stop us at the gates refusing us access to His presence if we're somehow grief stricken, but He invites us to come *boldly* before His throne of grace that we might *find* grace to help in time of need. We read in the book of Hebrews, "*For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*" Heb 4:15-16 Mordecai wasn't able to approach *his* king (Ahasuerus) while grieving, Jesus invites us openly, tells us to come *boldly unto* Him, that we might pour out our hearts *before* Him, obtaining mercy and finding forgiveness, grace to help in our time of need. So no matter what you may be experiencing or going through tonight, if you're down, or depressed, distressed or whatever, the bible exhorts us, "...*casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.*" 1 Peter 5:7

Vs4-9

Few things here quickly, #1 Mordecai just pulled the curtain back on the fact that Esther was a Jew to this guy Hathach. You recall that up until this point her identity has been sort of undercover, on the down low, she's been flying under the radar with respect to her nationality. Well, now it's being made known, we don't know if perhaps this Hathach fella wasn't a Jew himself so Mordecai feels a liberty to confide in him, or if perhaps he simply realizes that in the light of the current crisis it's become an irrelevant point at this juncture.

But it's also kinda cool that Hathach becomes a fairly pivotal player in the divine scheme of things. Had he not been a faithful go between for Esther and Mordecai who knows how things would've played out, yet I would say that if you were to ask what the name of the guy was who delivered Mordecai's message to Esther which in turn led to Esther's intercession that spared the entire nation of the Jews, 9 out of 10 people wouldn't even have clue. But God used him (believer or not I don't know) in a powerful and pivotal way, and so often that's just the way it is in God's economy.

We always think, “Man if so and so were to get saved (thinking of some high profile celebrity) think of the impact they’d have on the world!” But in many respects that’d be the problem, it’d be *their* impact, *their* influence, where’s the glory for God in that? So what does God do, He grabs hold of someone that no one knows their name, nobody’s familiar with their face, some insignificant individual in the eyes of the world and does a radical work in their life. Who’s Billy Graham? Who’d heard of him before God began to use his life? Or Chuck Smith, or Charles Spurgeon, or D.L. Moody, but God grabbed hold of them and used these guys in a way that made for a global impact, for generations. Peter, James and John, fishermen, Matthew, a tax collector, Saul of Tarsus was the most elite of them all, the only one with a college degree, but for the most part insignificant in the eyes of the world.

What was the name of the little boy who had 5 loaves and 2 little fish that day when Jesus used what he gave to Him to feed thousands, what was the name of the servant girl who told Naaman to go see Elisha the prophet, or who were the guys who saved Paul’s life in lowering him down over the Damascus wall in a basket? We may never know, but God used their lives in powerful and profound ways. Who are you? For that matter who am I? Nobody, but so often that’s just the way God prefers to move, He wants to use your life in a radical, pivotal way, then He alone will be glorified and magnified in the situation. You know the scripture, “*For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.*” 1 Cor 1:26-29 But rather as he states a couple Vs later, “*...that, as it is written, ‘He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.’*” 1 Cor 1:31 So though this Hathach fella is found in sort of a supporting role, he’s a key player in the providential plan of God. You may not be a limelight kinda guy, or gal, but God can use you in fundamentally strategic ways in the accomplishing of His agenda in this world.

Finally in this portion I want you to see the very clear call to active involvement that is given to Esther at this point. She’s called upon to make supplication to the king, that is intercede before him, plead before him for the sake of her people. God’s call upon her life is beginning to be made manifest, and what I want you to realize is that this same type of thing happens in each and everyone of our lives as believers. Oh your situation may not be quite this dramatic, maybe your call comes in the form of hearing an announcement in the bulletin about an area of need in the body, or perhaps through a bible study, something you’ve heard on the radio, or at work, there’s any # of ways that God may open up and avail an opportunity for you to become actively involved in the work of His kingdom. The only question that remains is are you going to respond to His call in the affirmative? Now there’s a cost to be counted, there always is, and with Esther there was no exception.

Vs 10-12

“Mordecai consider what you’re asking me to do here...” The law was incredibly clear, anyone who showed his/her face in the king’s chambers with out being invited would be instantly put to death right there on the spot unless the king immediately outstretched his golden scepter that he held in his right hand. And she says, “I’m not even sure that I’m in the good graces of the king, he hasn’t called for me in over a month, if I just waltz in there I could be signing my own death sentence.”

By the way, this is not the ideal marriage situation, if you haven’t spoken to your wife in a month, there’s a problem, if she’s afraid to approach you for fear that you may not hold out the golden scepter of approval, there’s a problem. Now I’m not saying that marriage is a free for all with out accountability or responsibility on the behalf of the wife, but I am saying that the husband isn’t a dictator king, but that there’s to be an intimacy, and unity in Christ in the marriage unit, not a cold, formal, distant relationship.

Vs13-14

Of course these words mark a real pinnacle or summit peak in the book of Esther, Mordecai informs her of the facts, and they’re words of real insight. He says, “Don’t think that just because you’re married to the king that you’ll escape this edict any more than any of the rest of the Jews, the decree is clear, extermination of the Jews, and *you’re* a Jew.” So in essence as she’s counting the cost of her involvement she says, “It may mean my death.”

Mordecai says, “If you don’t get involved it *will* mean your death.” Or to understand all this another way, “If the worst thing that happens to you due to your stepping out and getting involved in God’s plan is your physical death, what’s that to you, you’re going to die anyway. The only question is are you going to die seeking to serve the Lord or seeking to safeguard your own interests?” Death is inevitable, but what you do with your *life* will make all the difference. Notice Mordecai’s words in Vs 14, “If you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place,” now there’s no getting around that, those are words of faith. Though faith isn’t mentioned in this book, nor is there any reference to God specifically, this is a clear cut inference to the fact that Mordecai trusts in God’s promises to the nation of Israel, and though they’re in a position that by and large demonstrates faithlessness, He understands that nothing will impede God’s *faithfulness*. God made a covenant with Israel that absolutely eliminates the option of the eradication of the nation of Israel, there’ve been multiple attempts throughout history to erase the Jews from the planet, and all have failed. And all *will* fail because God will *not* fail to keep His Word to them. And here Mordecai affirms the fact that he believes that, but he says, “If you don’t get involved, or become actively obedient to God’s prompting, or plan for you *personally*, it’ll just make for your own destruction *eventually*.” So to with you, so to with me, when we don’t follow through in obedience to God’s prompting personally, it has this way of eroding at you and even destroying you *spiritually*. It may not happen over night, but bit by bit, little by little we just slip further and further into spiritual lethargy because we just won’t obey His prompting us personally.

We want to do what we want to do, and that my friends is a killer. God wants to use you, but if not He'll use someone else, and you're the only one who'll be hurt in the process, you'll miss out on what God wanted to use *you* for.

“Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for a time such as this?” “Esther think it through, you're an orphan girl, a Jew in the land of exile and captivity, but you just happened to be married to the king over the entire empire, the most powerful man on the face of the earth and a law has just been made to destroy all the Jews. Add it up, do you think it's a coincidence that you're his wife?” Mordecai is seeking to give to her the sovereign providential perspective. “You're in the right place, at the right time to intercede for this nation, that's not by chance, God has a plan.” The word “Coincidence” really has no place in the vocabulary of the Christian. We believe emphatically in the sovereignty of God and that He's very much in control orchestrating the events of human history according to His will. But He chooses to accomplish His purposes through individual people. And so wherever you are, and whatever you're doing, (housewife, electrician, school teacher, secretary, tradesman) don't buy the lie that you're there by chance. God has you where you are for an express purpose, seek it out, walk in it, be obedient to it. I have a doctor friend who has story after story of the unique opportunities that God gives him to pray for and share the gospel with a desperate and sometimes dying people, or the families of the person to whom he's administering medical care. And in your situation there are opportunities that avail themselves that no one else but you can walk *through* or take advantage *of*, and God has you there for that reason, are you walking in it? Being obedient to Him in it?

Up until this point Esther may've had no clue why God allowed her to be in this position, but in a single moment it became clear how God could use her in a powerful and profound way, right where she was at. Maybe you're in a weird place in your walk, not sure exactly how you got there.

But turn to the Lord, be *open* to the Lord, and He'll use your life and begin to move you forward in your commitment and resolve unto Him.

There was a reason Joseph went through what he did, being sold off into slavery, seeming to see the silver lining around the grey cloud only to be wrongly accused and thrown in prison, left there seemingly forgotten about for 3 yrs. Then it all became clear, Pharaoh had a need and he was the only one who could minister to him in that place, as you know he was exalted as the 2nd most powerful man on the face of the earth right under Pharaoh and God used that to spare the nation of Israel. Years later when he finally saw his brothers again he said, “...*as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.*” Gen 50:20 Somewhere and at some point in a single moment in time it became clear, God was (not necessarily causing those things) allowing those thing to take place and would use those things to orchestrate an essential aspect of His plan. The salvation of the nation (at its roots) of Israel.

There was a reason that Moses was spared when the order had gone out from the Pharaoh that every Hebrew infant who was a boy 2 yrs old and under was to be put to death. Yet he providentially wound up being raised in the palace of the very Pharaoh that had ordered his execution, being taught in the finest schools in the world, in the technology of the Egyptians, military leadership and all the rest. Next thing he knew he found himself being humbled, in exile as it were himself out meandering with the sheep for 40yrs, because God was going to use him to shepherd His people, save that nation (as it were) alive.

And there's a reason Esther is where she is, it's for a time such as this that she's been placed where she's at, everyone of those people were moved into various positions in life by the sovereign hand of God. And God is the same yesterday today and forever He changes not, what's my point? You're where you are for the same reason, God has a plan, you may not see it now, but when God does the work, so often that's when it all becomes clear.

Vs15-17

Now we shouldn't see the words of Vs 16 as blind fatalism, "If I die, I die!" These are the words of an individual who's seen the *cause*, has counted the *cost*, and has heeded the *call*. What we're finding here is that Esther is committing unrelentingly to the sovereign will of God for her life regardless of what the outcome may be. Paul said it like this, "...*according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*" Phil 1:20-22 There are so many applicable scriptures here, this is really the key, being willing to lose your life for Christ's sake, that's where true life is to be found. Outside of that is just an empty insatiable, unquenchable thirst of self seeking and personal agenda. To the Romans Paul said, "*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*" Rom 12:1 Coming to that place where it's not about you, it's about pleasing the Lord, and being available to Him to use in whatever way He sees fit be it by life, or by death. Of course for the believer we're called upon to die to self daily, to take up our cross and follow Christ. Seeking to save our life, live for self, we'll lose it, but if we'll lay down our lives, our will, our agenda, our self seeking for Christ's sake, we'll find true life. That's what Jesus said. Esther came to the place whereby she was prepared to pay the ultimate price of laying down her life for the sake of others if there was a chance it would make for their salvation. What a great place to come to, that like Job we might say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."

But I don't want to end focused on *her* willingness, as noble as that was, there's another, the Greater than Esther, Jesus Christ who made the ultimate sacrifice, paid the ultimate price for you and for me.

For Him it was never a matter of, "Well perhaps it may come to this and if it does than death is inevitable anyway so I'm committing Myself to whatever God has for Me."

He was completely sinless, didn't *have* to even come to this earth, but when He did there was never a question, He had an express agenda, to lay down His life for you, and for Me. Remember, "...*just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.*" Matt 20:28 and In so doing He provided the escape from the penalty of death imposed upon all of mankind salvation imputed to you and to me and all who will call upon His name.

Prayer points:

Jesus we thank You for Your willingness to become the ultimate sacrifice, and pay the ultimate price to emancipate us, to liberate us from the penalty of death that sin had imposed upon us. And I pray that you'd help each and everyone of us to become unrelentingly committed to Your will for our lives, perhaps we've gotten ourselves into a mess but we realize You can redeem us out of any given situation and use us for your glory as we avail ourselves to You. Teach us what it means to truly *be* available to You, and may we safeguard our walk *with* You. God we're in awe over Your wisdom in how You use seemingly small and insignificant people like us to be pivotal players in the accomplishing of Your purposes, may we walk in sensitivity to Your Spirit. And we thank You Lord that we can come to your when we're grieving, that You invite us to come boldly before Your throne of grace to *obtain* grace in our time of need. Help us to see those opportunities You extend to us, to count the cost and heed Your call.