

Session 4

May 13, 2018

STAND WITH HUMILITY

Esther 5:1-14

By chapter 5, the story gets really interesting. All of the key players in the drama of God's providence are present, and each brings to the scene a distinct characteristic. Yet in every case, God's hand can be seen moving and directing both the action and the actors.

In Esther, we see faith (v. 1). Once Esther gets over her fears and doubts, she moves forward with confident intention. If she acts, she *may* die. If she fails to act, she will *most certainly* die (4: 16). But far from a depressed resignation to fate, Esther demonstrates clear thinking and decisive action. After three days of fasting and prayer, she dressed up in her best gown and solemnly stepped into the king's courtyard. From far across the courtyard, she caught the king's eye as he sat perched on his throne. No doubt, the servants to the king were astonished at her boldness, but they were powerless to stop her. After all, she was the queen.

In King Ahasuerus, we see favor (vv. 2-8). "The king's heart *is* in the hand of the Lord; *like* the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes" (Prov. 21:1). In this case, God turned the king's heart toward his beautiful queen. Three phrases indicate the king's pleasure. First, verse 2 indicates that as soon as the king saw her, "she won his approval." Second, according to the ancient tradition, the king extended his royal scepter toward her. This served as an official invitation to present herself to the king. Third, without yet being asked, King Ahasuerus offered to his queen whatever she wanted, "even to half the kingdom" (v. 3).

With her audience granted, Esther proceeded with her plan. Haman and the king would be treated to a banquet. During the wine service, the king once again presented his offer to the queen. But her initial request was as simple and humble as it was honorable, and another banquet was requested for the following day.

In Mordecai, we see commitment (v. 9). The only thing that could spoil Haman's delight as he departed the royal banquet Esther had prepared, was the glaring insult of Mordecai the Jew who "didn't rise or tremble in fear at his presence." Perhaps the entire episode would have been avoided if Mordecai had given in to Haman's request. But doing so would have betrayed his God, and ultimately led the Jews to compromise the faith of their fathers; a faith that God had reestablished by the very exile that had placed the Jews in Persia to begin with!

In Haman, we see pride (vv. 10-13). Verses 10-12 describe the pitiful arrogance of a selfish, self-absorbed man. First, he gathered his family and friends to hear his brag-fest. Then he boasted of his wealth and prominence. Then he bragged about his promoted position. Finally, he let them all know about the royal banquet that only he was invited to attend. Haman had it all, but it still wasn't enough! He was honored by an entire city of people. But he would not rest until he was honored by a humble Jew named Mordecai (v. 13).

In Zeresh, we see disdain (v. 14). Behind every awful man stands an equally hideous woman. In response to Haman her husband, Zeresh essentially declared, "If you can't beat 'em, then kill 'em!" Notice the pride they took in planning the execution of their enemy. Not only was the gallows to stand an astounding 75 feet high, but the arrogant assumption was that a simple request to King Ahasuerus would be granted without question by one so close to the king and so influential in his decisions. No doubt Haman went to sleep that night looking forward to a perfect day. Mordecai would die on the gallows...and he would dine with the king.