



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

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Jump Start # 2824

Esther 4:16 *“Go, assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa, and fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens also will fast in the same way. And thus I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I will perish.”*

Our verse today contains the courageous words of the Jewish queen, Esther. Most know the story. Wicked Haman tricked the king into making an edict to eliminate all the Jews. They were to be wiped out. Killed. Slaughtered. That would include Esther. But, since she was the queen, she had an inside track to the king. She became the hope for all the Jews. If she didn't act, the Jews would have been killed. Her relative, Mordecai, tells her, which is one of the most famous expressions in this book, “who knows whether or not you have attained royalty for such a time as this?” Maybe the very reason, Esther was the queen, was for that moment.

Several wonderful lessons for us:

First, even though Esther was married to the king, she could not approach him without permission. That is so foreign to our times. We'd think, over dinner, Esther would just straighten things out with the king. That wasn't the way things worked. To approach the king without permission, as our verse indicates, could well invoke the death penalty. What a difficult situation that put Esther in. There was no one else to do what she had to do.

Now, do you see a bridge to you and I? It's not approaching a king, or facing death, but often, it falls upon us as individuals to go speak to someone about their soul. There is no one else. No one else in the family will do it. No one else in the church has the connections as we do. Or, even more difficult, there may be a conversation that needs to take place that leads to repentance, forgiveness and some apologies. It may not go well. A friendship might end. The conversation may turn ugly. We think and think about what needs to be done. We wish that anyone else would do it. But there is no one. It's you or it's no one. You know that you must go.

Second, Esther understood the value of having others pray for her. She called upon all the Jews in the city to fast. This was more than just going without food. Most times in the Bible, fasting and prayer are hand in hand. Don't eat for three days. During those three days, they'd be praying. Praying that the king would give Esther a moment to speak. Praying that Esther would find the right words.

(OVER)

Praying that those words would touch the king's heart and that he would be moved. The Jews in Susa could not go to the king, but what they could do was pray. Proverbs tells us that the king's heart is like water in God's hands. God can turn that heart any direction. Although no one else could go with Esther and no one else could stand beside her, the Jews were inviting God to be there.

Here is another wonderful bridge for you and I. Maybe it's not up to us to have a delicate conversation with someone. It may be the preacher. It may be the shepherds. It may be someone who has a connection. But you know about it. Although you cannot be there, you can pray. You can pray for right words. You can pray for courage. You can pray for a soft heart that listens. Your prayers can do as much good as if you were standing right beside the person.

Third, Esther understood the seriousness of the situation. She could die. What she was doing was breaking the law, but it had to be done. Faith and courage will cause a person to rise up and do what is right. We put ourselves in the background and we stand with the Lord. To do nothing meant certain doom. So often, God's people were placed in life and death situations. Daniel in the lion's den. The three Jewish youths and the fiery furnace. Peter in prison. Paul shipwrecked. Following God and doing what is right is often risky and hard. Consequences follow. Esther knew this. She could die. She prayed. She had others pray. Then, she approached the king.

Fourth, the most powerful lesson I see here is how different it is for us to approach the Lord of Heaven and Earth. We don't have to approach Him in fear. We don't have to wait to be summoned. We don't have to fear dying because we approach Him. Come boldly to the throne of grace is what Hebrews tells us. **(Heb. 4:10)** Don't be bashful. Don't be fearful. Don't be scared. Come. Come boldly. Come now. For three days, Esther, prayed, fasted and thought about what she had to do. We don't have to go through that to talk to God. What a blessing we have in the Lord. What a loving and open relationship we have. Esther could talk to God much easier than she could talk to her own husband. We need to be thankful that God wants us to talk to Him.

We must not allow fear to keep us from doing what needs to be done. The fearful preacher will never preach what really needs to be addressed in the congregation. The fearful shepherds will never approach certain members because they don't want a tongue lashing. The fearful parent will not deal with the rebellious attitude of their teenager. We must pray and then do what is right.

Who knows whether you are put in the place you are for such a purpose as this? Who knows if God has put you in your family so you could lead them to Christ. Who knows if God opened doors for you to work where you do so you could show others the love of Jesus. Who knows if God did not put you in the congregation you are in to lead them to a closer and more Biblical relationship with the Lord. Who knows?

But one thing we do know, remaining silent, doing nothing, will never accomplish anything. It was a chance for Esther, but it was well worth it. It will be a chance for us, but if God works through us, that too, will be well worth it.

Such a time as this...

Roger Shouse (used by permission)
