

## God is on the Move Part 3: Responding to the decree

Esther 4

Wailing

Wondering

Wavering

Willing

Wailing

Esther 4:1 *When Mordecai learned all that had been done, Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and he cried out with a loud and bitter cry.*

Lest we should be so out of tune with the culture of the author (for whom the outward signs of grief were deadly serious), it is necessary for us to put ourselves in the place of Mordecai, who by his pig-headed pride or loyalty to principle brought disaster not merely on himself but on his whole race. The punishment is grossly out of proportion to the crime, and suggests that something akin to anti-Semitism was already present in embryo among the populations of the lands of the Dispersion.

Baldwin, J. G. (1984). [\*Esther: An Introduction and Commentary\*](#) (Vol. 12, p. 76). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Esther 4:2 *He went up to the entrance of the king's gate, for no one was allowed to enter the king's gate clothed in sackcloth.*

Nehemiah 2:2 *And the king said to me, "Why is your face sad, seeing you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of the heart." Then I was very much afraid.*

Esther 4:3 *And in every province, wherever the king's command and his decree reached, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting and weeping and lamenting, and many of them lay in sackcloth and ashes.*

Wondering

Esther 4:4–5 *When Esther's young women and her eunuchs came and told her, the queen was deeply distressed. She sent garments to clothe Mordecai, so that he might take off his sackcloth, but he would not accept them. <sup>5</sup> Then Esther called for*

*Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs, who had been appointed to attend her, and ordered him to go to Mordecai to learn what this was and why it was.*

*Esther 4:6–9 Hathach went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king's gate, <sup>7</sup> and Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the exact sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries for the destruction of the Jews. <sup>8</sup> Mordecai also gave him a copy of the written decree issued in Susa for their destruction, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her and command her to go to the king to beg his favor and plead with him on behalf of her people. <sup>9</sup> And Hathach went and told Esther what Mordecai had said.*

### Wavering

*Esther 4:10–12 Then Esther spoke to Hathach and commanded him to go to Mordecai and say, <sup>11</sup> "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law—to be put to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter so that he may live. But as for me, I have not been called to come in to the king these thirty days." <sup>12</sup> And they told Mordecai what Esther had said.*

That Esther had not been called to the king *these thirty days* is just one more indication how abnormal life was in the palace at Susa.

Baldwin, J. G. (1984). [\*Esther: An Introduction and Commentary\*](#) (Vol. 12, p. 79). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

*Esther 4:13–14 Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, "Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. <sup>14</sup> For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"*

### Willing

*Esther 4:15–17 Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, <sup>16</sup> "Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish." <sup>17</sup> Mordecai then went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him.*

### Lesson

## Crying out to God

It's often the case that God's people have to experience trouble before they will humble themselves and cry out to God.

Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Be Committed* (p. 115). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

James 5:13 *Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise.*

## Godly sorrow

2 Corinthians 7:10 *For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.*

Daniel 9:3–11 *Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. <sup>4</sup> I prayed to the LORD my God and made confession, saying, "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, <sup>5</sup> we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. <sup>6</sup> We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. <sup>7</sup> To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame, as at this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away, in all the lands to which you have driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against you. <sup>8</sup> To us, O LORD, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you. <sup>9</sup> To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him <sup>10</sup> and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God by walking in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. <sup>11</sup> All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the curse and oath that are written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him.*

Esther 4:14 *For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"*

Psalm 32:3–4 *For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. <sup>4</sup> For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.*

Esther 4:14 *For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"*

Romans 13:11–14 *Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. <sup>12</sup> The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. <sup>13</sup> Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. <sup>14</sup> But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.*

Resolve fully to obey God

Esther 4:16 *"Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish."*

1 Peter 2:20 *For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.*

Relief and deliverance will rise

James 1:12 *Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.*

Fasting and prayer

Prayer is the principal purpose of fasting, in that fasting concentrates the mind and helps to detach it from current preoccupations.

Prime, D. (2001). [\*Unspoken Lessons About the Unseen God: Esther Simply Explained\*](#) (p. 83). Darlington, England: Evangelical Press.

