



The Faith and Courage of a Woman: The Story of Esther

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The story begins with King Ahasuerus throwing an extravagant, boisterous party.

Esther 1:10-11 — “On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar and Carkas, the seven eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus, to bring Queen Vashti before the king with her royal crown in order to display her beauty to the people and the princes, for she was beautiful.”

He'd been showing off all of his possessions, and now he wants to show them his ultimate possession, his trophy wife.

Esther 1:12 — “But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king’s command delivered by the eunuchs. Then the king became very angry and his wrath burned within him.”

In his anger, King Ahasuerus seeks to retaliate against his wife. One of his advisors, Memucan, warns him that the social structure of the empire would crumble if the people knew of Vashti’s defiance.

Esther 1:19-21 — “If it pleases the king, let a royal edict be issued by him and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media so that it cannot be repealed, that Vashti may no longer come into the presence of King Ahasuerus, and let the king give her royal position to another who is more worthy than she. When the king’s edict which he will make is heard throughout all his kingdom, great as it is, then all women will give honor to their husbands, great and small.” This word pleased the king and the princes, and the king did as Memucan proposed.”

After the king removes Vashti as queen, he calls for a royal beauty pageant.

Read Esther 2:2-7

Esther, a young Jewish girl, is drafted into the competition and wins the heart of the king.

Esther 2:17-18 — “The king loved Esther more than all the women, and she found favor and kindness with him more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. Then the king gave a great banquet, Esther’s banquet, for all his princes and his servants; he also made a holiday for the provinces and gave gifts according to the king’s bounty.”

Though the king chose her to be his beauty queen, it was God who put Esther in this place of great influence at the right time.

Esther’s guardian, Mordecai, an official in the king’s court, uncovered a plot to assassinate the king and saved his life.

Esther 2:21-23 — “In those days, while Mordecai was sitting at the king’s gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king’s officials from those who guarded the door, became angry and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. But the plot became known to Mordecai and he told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai’s name. Now when the plot was investigated and found to be so, they were both hanged on a gallows; and it was written in the Book of the Chronicles in the king’s presence”

This foiled assassination attempt gets recorded in the official records of the King.

Read Esther 3:1-11 — Haman, angry at Mordecai for refusing to bow to him, calls for the destruction of all Jews. The king agrees.

Esther 4:1-3 — “When Mordecai learned all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city and wailed loudly and bitterly. He went as far as the king’s gate, for no one was to enter the king’s gate clothed in sackcloth. In each and every province where the command and decree of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing; and many lay on sackcloth and ashes.”

As the Jews mourn this news, Mordecai charges Esther to go to the king and entreat him on behalf of the people. Esther hesitates at first because her life would be in danger if she appeared before the king uninvited.

Esther 4:12-14 — “They related Esther’s words to Mordecai. Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, ‘Do not imagine that you in the king’s palace can escape any more than all the Jews. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?’”

You have not been brought to this point in your life for the sake of accumulating an exquisite wardrobe, or to become the most desirable and attractive woman in the kingdom. You have been brought to this point by God to be part of His plan to redeem the

world.

Mordecai issues a strong challenge: "If you say no, you miss the purpose of your whole existence."

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 perish."

Esther does not face this situation trusting in her own beauty, cleverness, wisdom, and courage. She fasts and prays, knowing that God alone can help her. Survival is not her primary goal. Her life has been given over to something much bigger than her own existence or the retaining of her royalty. Her worst-case scenario is not death, it's disobedience.

Esther 5:3 – "Then the king said to her, 'What is troubling you, Queen Esther? And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be given to you.'"

Esther then wisely invites the king and Haman to a banquet before she makes her request.

Read Esther 5:5-8 – Esther invites the king and Haman to another banquet the following day, during which she will finally make her request.

Before the climax of the story, the author goes into more detail about Haman.

Read Esther 5:9-14

Haman brags to his wife and friends about the banquet Queen Esther invited him to, and complains how Mordecai refused to bow to him. His wife and friends advise him to build a gallows to hang Mordecai on.

Esther 6:1 – "During that night the king could not sleep so he gave an order to bring the book of records, the chronicles, and they were read before the king."

Of all things, the king's servants read about the time Mordecai saved the king but had never been honored.

Esther 6:2-3 – "It was found written what Mordecai had reported concerning Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs who were doorkeepers, that they had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. The king said, 'What honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this? Then the king's servants who attended him said, 'Nothing has been done for him.'"

The next morning Haman arrives. In perfect irony, he knows nothing about what took place the night before.

Read Esther 6:6-11 – Haman unknowingly plans Mordecai's celebration procession.

That was not what Haman was planning on, but he does it anyway. Afterwards, he leaves humiliated.

Read Esther 6:12-14

At the banquet, the king finally asks Esther to present her request. And Esther, with utter dependence on God and amazing wisdom, says to the king that she and her people, the Jews, are about to be destroyed.

Read Esther 7:3-10 – Esther reveals Haman's plot to kill the Jews.

The king now needs a new chief of staff.

Esther 8:2 – "The king took off his signet ring which he had taken away from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman."

Esther then reminds the king that the old edict against the Jews still stands; it's the unalterable law of the Medes and the Persians. The king hands over his signet ring and allows Mordecai to write a new law that reverses the old.

Esther 8:17 – In each and every province and in each and every city, wherever the king's commandment and his decree arrived, there was gladness and joy for the Jews, a feast and a holiday. And many among the peoples of the land became Jews, for the dread of the Jews had fallen on them.

Not only were the Jews not going to be destroyed, but other people were also pretending to be Jewish! The Jews were not only spared but blessed. **God's purpose was better than Mordecai, Esther, and the Jewish people could have imagined.**

There is a law that is unalterable. There is a will that will not be stopped, but it isn't the law of the Medes and the Persians.

The Bible, although it's subtle, makes it clear that **God** is at work behind the scenes and His purpose is certain. He puts His people in key places for such a time as this.