

Pictures of God's Servants - 01

Queen Esther

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Purpose Statement: In the next few weeks we are going to look at different saints of God, from both the Old and New Testament, to see how they served God in their own unique way. Their experiences teach us about interacting with God when faced with difficult circumstances.

Esther - The first character we want to look at is Queen Esther, who laid her life on the line and gave up her own safety to risk saving her people.

It is appropriate to start here because our nation celebrates it's Veterans today. Those brave men and women who have laid their lives on the line and have given up their own safety to insure our freedom and the freedom of many others around the world.

Introduction

Metal of Honor

I read the accounts of these three brave soldiers for two reasons.

To honor not only our bravest Veterans but all veterans who have served our God blessed country. To introduce you to the honor that is due those who fight in a much nobler cause than the cause of freedom for a country, or for a flag that represents any human ideal.

Text:

(Es 3:6b ...Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus..)

[Es 4:1-17 NASB] 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. [2] He went as far as the king's gate, for no one was to enter the king's gate clothed in sackcloth. [3] 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. [4] Then Esther's maidens and her eunuchs came and told her, and the queen writhed in great anguish. And she sent garments to clothe Mordecai that he might remove his sackcloth from him, but he did not accept them.

Not realizing the seriousness of the situation Esther is appalled that her cousin Mordecai would dress and act in such a demeaning way at the gate of the royal palace. But Mordecai has entered in to a battle for his life and for the lives of his people the Jews. And to magnify the seriousness and intensity of this situation, Mordecai realizes that this is a spiritual battle. And so he puts on the uniform and demeanor of a soldier engaged in a spiritual battle; sackcloth and ashes. Have you ever seen anyone in sackcloth, and sitting in ashes? What would happen if one hundred thousand Christians were to gather on the great square in Washington DC to protest abortion? And what if they were all dressed in sackcloth and sat in ashes fasting for three days? I think if there were such a protest most people would make a vacation out of it, eating at the fine restaurants and taking in all the sights and attractions. We want to stay in our comfort zone, we don't want to be too radical or too conspicuous. Which approach would show the world and our leaders the seriousness of our resolve; sackcloth, ashes, and fasting, or vacationing? Which approach would get God's attention? I think Mordecai shows us what it means to do real spiritual warfare. Queen Esther shows us the normal reaction to such a battle tactic. Let's not get too radical here, don't overreact, keep calm and normal. Then she is made to see the seriousness of the situation, and she steps out of her comfort zone and joins in the real battle at hand.

[5] Then Esther summoned Hathach from the king's eunuchs, whom the king had appointed to attend her, and ordered him to go to Mordecai to learn what this was and why it was.

Notice that Queen Esther did not get mad at Mordecai but instead set out to find out what the facts were. Why was Mordecai doing this, what are the real facts here?

[6] So Hathach went out to Mordecai to the city square in front of the king's gate. [7] Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the exact amount of money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the destruction of the Jews. [8] He also gave him a copy of the text of the edict which had been issued in Susa for their destruction, that he might show Esther and inform her, and to order her to go in to the king to implore his favor and to plead with him for her people. [9] Hathach came back and related Mordecai's words to Esther. [10] Then Esther spoke to Hathach and ordered him to reply to Mordecai: [11] "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that for any man or woman who comes to the king to the inner court who is not summoned, he has but one law, that he be put to death, unless the king holds out to him the golden scepter so that he may live. And I have not been summoned to come to the king for these thirty days."

"I have not been summoned." Sometimes to do what is right we must go against what is said to be proper and right and reasonable. In serving God we must give Him our life and sometimes that means literally laying your physical life down to accomplish His will. Most Christians say that they would give their lives for Christ and His cause if it became necessary. But few understand that the total giving of self is the requirement for following Christ every day. (Mt 10:38, Mt 16:25) One way to examine the reality of my intentions is to look at how I give myself for Christ and His cause in the little, seemingly insignificant, every day things.

[12] They related Esther's words to Mordecai.

[13] 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.

Sometimes we want to hide, to escape. In fact survival without pain or conflict is our first reaction and instinct. Sometimes we think that because we are close to God we can escape the battle. Mordecai wants Esther to understand that even in the King's palace she will not escape. She must join in the battle or be consumed by it in defeat. No matter how close to God we become in our relationship with Him we will never be free of the battle until the last battle is fought and Satan has been done away with forever.

[14] "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?"

Look at Mordecai's faith here. Deliverance will arise from another place. He is certain that God is in control and that God will work out His divine will.

God is in control of even the worst of situations. If we will trust Him, He will use us in spectacular ways. If we shrink back, God will use someone else or some other way to accomplish His will. For example in...

1 Corinthians 15:22-28 (NASB)

[22] For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. [23] But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, [24] then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. [25] For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. [26] The last enemy that will be abolished is death. [27] For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. [28] When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.

In this spiritual battle some have had to die, in numerous ways many have suffered for the Kingdom of God. Many have not, but that is the choice of the providence of God, for He knows how much each of us can take. In his second letter to the Corinthians Paul says...

2 Corinthians 4:7-12 (NASB)

[7] But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will

be of God and not from ourselves; [8] we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; [9] persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; [10] always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. [11] For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. [12] So death works in us, but life in you.

There are some wonderful promises from God but this promise is a promise for the battle weary soldier in Christ's army who is engaged in spiritual warfare for the Kingdom of God.

[15] Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, [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."

Knowing that God is in control should bring us to Him for deliverance or for courage and strength to go through what is to come by His permission.

The story goes on and has a good ending but that is not the most important part of the story as most would suppose. The most important part of the story is right here where people seek God and lay themselves at His disposal and His mercy.

[17] So Mordecai went away and did just as Esther had commanded him.

Today we celebrate our veterans who have given of themselves for the rest of us and for many others around the world. Some of our veterans have paid the supreme sacrifice and given limb and life for this noble cause of freedom.

Let us also celebrate those veterans who fought and are fighting in the spiritual battle. Many have and are giving their lives in martyrdom for the Kingdom of God. But all of Christ's followers have given their lives to Him for the cause of the Kingdom of God.

How dedicated are you to the Kingdom of God and the cause of following Jesus the Messiah? If God were to lay it on your heart would you do such a march on Washington; or any other battle that He might lay on your heart no matter how great or small it might seem to you?

This is the lesson we learn from Queen Esther and her cousin Mordecai; that spiritual warfare is never trivial. It should never be taken lightly. We must confront evil in our personal lives, in our homes, in our churches, in our schools, in our communities, and in our country.

- We must get beyond our initial reaction to remain normal and safe.
- We must get the real facts.
- We must enter into the battle.
- We must trust God to work His supreme will out in His time and in His way.

This is what it is to be a warrior like Mordecai. This is what it means to follow Christ.

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