

## Esther the patient

- Esther 5
- The title has nothing to do with Esther's medical condition. However, had things gone badly on day three of the fast when Esther showed up in the inner court, she would have needed an undertaker, not a doctor. No, if you have been reading chapter 5 of Esther this week, then maybe you have thought about her patience in the way she handled the problem of the king's decree. The king had signed a decree, at the suggestion of his top official Haman, that all the Jews be eliminated from the kingdom on certain day in a certain month. We saw in chapter 4 that Mordecai told Esther to go to the king and plead for his favor on behalf of her people. Esther did not want to do that because it was against the law to approach the king without an invitation, and she was afraid that she would end up dead. Mordecai reasoned with her that she was going to end up dead anyway, and that relief would arise for the Jews from another place if she did not act, presumably because Mordecai believed in the providence of God and that He would keep His promise to His covenant people. Then he said to Esther those words that are on people's living rooms and bedrooms and perhaps on bathroom mirrors as encouragement and exhortation: "And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther gathered her courage and said ok, I will go see the king, and if I perish, I perish.
- **We see the patience of Esther in her decision to wait for three days before she went.** Of course she was fasting, as were her young women and all the Jews in Susa. But the point is, she didn't rush in and make an appeal to the king. That's what some of us would do, especially Type A's who get an idea and then immediately act on it. Or see a problem and immediately try to fix it. Sometimes that makes the problem worse because we go in half-cocked and unprepared in our minds or our spirits. There's much in the Bible about waiting on the Lord and letting patience have its perfect work. Esther was fasting but that's not all. Those three days were filled with prayers but they were also busy with planning. She was planning what she would say to the king if she were given the chance to say anything. AND, she was planning a feast. Two of them, in fact. So, those three days illustrate the patience of Esther. Notice she didn't wait three months: that would have illustrated procrastination, not patience, and we don't know what would have happened by then. She knew she needed to act with deliberateness but not with haste or with sloth. She understood the importance of timing.
- On the third day she put on her royal robes. Esther was patient *and* wise. She was going to meet with the king, who was seated on his royal throne in the royal palace. She most certainly was wise in the way she dressed to meet with him. She didn't just throw on a dirty sweatshirt and some jeans and rush to the throne room with her face unwashed and her hair in a mess. Esther was going to meet with the king. And the king was a man. A man that had chosen her as his wife 5 years earlier because of her beauty.
- **We see the patience of Esther in the first request she made of the king.** When Esther showed up in the inner court, she had a plan. I believe God gave her that plan during the three days of fasting and crying out to Him. So when the king sees her standing there, and he basically says, 'You can have whatever you want,' Esther doesn't go right in with the request. She doesn't point her manicured finger at the king and say, "Haman is a snake and a liar, and YOU can't even see it!...O king. O great one." No, she simply says that if it pleased the king, she would like for him and Haman to come to a feast that she had prepared. That did please the king, as she knew it would. He loved feasts, as we saw in chapter one. And for her to come not asking for something but with something she wanted to give to the king was a powerful play. It won the king's heart. It also put Haman off his guard, and set him up for his big collapse, which was coming. Soon.
- **We see the patience of Esther in the second request she made of the king.**
- Sometimes, half the battle is won by waiting for the right time. Wise wives learn that the moment a tired and hungry husband walks in the door after a long day is not the time to ask him to do

something, or think about something or fix something or make an important decision. That's just bad timing. Esther knows that and she waits until the seven-course meal is done and the king's belly is full, and he is sipping his wine. Now he is ready to hear the request. More than ready. So he asked her what she wanted and again told her she could have whatever her pretty little heart desired. But Esther knew that the only thing a man liked more than a big feast was another one (that may not be completely true), and just to make sure she had the king's full attention, she asked if he and Haman would be the guests of honor for another banquet the following evening! I think perhaps the Lord led Esther to conceive of this plan simply because the Lord was going to trouble the king's sleep that night and something very significant was going to happen. But for whatever reason, the patience of Esther's plan required one more day.

- **Haman the proud**

- Notice verse 9. "And Haman went out that day joyful and glad of heart." It was the last time Haman would be joyful and glad of heart. But for now, he was on cloud nine. He had just been invited to a feast with the King and the Queen of Persia. Just him. Nobody else. His Twitter feed was already exploding since he had tweeted out the news during the banquet, and since he posted a couple of selfies he took with the king and queen. They even left him sit on the couch right between them. THE couch. You know the one I am talking about. The couch of horror. (you have to read ahead) But right now, he knows nothing but warm fuzzy feelings and a huge sense of how great he really was. That reminds me of the preacher who had just delivered a powerful sermon and as people left the church, one after another shook his hand and told him what a great sermon it was. And one person even said, "Pastor, you are a great man." Boy, he could hardly get his head in the car, and on the way home he was thinking about what that person said and he turned to his wife and said, "I wonder how many GREAT men there really are!" And she said, "One less than you think." Well, Haman thought he was a great man, for sure, and he almost floated out of the palace. Nothing could touch him. He was the man of Susa, and he was making up a song about himself and his greatness when he stopped dead in his tracks. There sat Mordecai, in the king's gate. Every one else had stood as he approached and they were bowing and scraping, but not Mordecai. He just sat there and glared at Haman. Oh, it was all the Big H could do to keep from exploding right there and taking the little Jew's head right off his shoulders. But he restrained himself and hurried home.
- We see the pride of Haman in the fact that one man's disapproval trumped everything else in his life at that moment. He was the number two man in the greatest kingdom on earth, and had the king's approval and the admiration of every person in Susa. Except one. That's all that mattered, because of his pride. Pride is like fire. All consuming. Never satisfied. A proud person is the center of his universe, and will not be happy if even one person fails to orbit around him in adoration. He has an insatiable thirst for recognition, for the praise of men, to be the center of attention. He lives for the applause of others, and that's why...
- A proud person has to tell you about himself and his accomplishments. Notice that Haman went home and then sent for his friends and for his wife. They knew what that meant. They were going to have to sit and listen to Haman tell them what a great man he was. He told them about his riches, and all that he had managed to accumulate. Maybe he took them out to the deck where they could gaze upon all the land he owned. Today he would show them pictures of his beach house and his mountain house and his chalet in the Swiss alps and his little 4000-sq ft bungalow, as he called it, in Maui. Hey, Haman even told them about how many sons he had, as they didn't all already know that, especially his wife. He told them all about the promotions the king had given him, and the latest honor, the feast he had just attended, and the one he was invited to, just ME, tomorrow night. After he had finished his monologue, he said this: (Verse 13) "Yet all this is worth nothing to me, so long as I see Mordecai sitting in the king's gate." He could not enjoy the memory of the feast he had just come from, nor could he enjoy the prospect of the feast he would go to the next night because of his towering pride and ego.
- Story of Nebuchadnezzar and his pride. Daniel 4:34-37

- When he finally took a breath, his wife and everyone in the room said, “Oh, get on with it, man. Build a gallows and hang Mordecai on it tomorrow. Make it 50 cubits high!” Finally, Mordecai is satisfied with that. The idea pleased him and he ordered the gallows to be built that very evening. And the irony continues.