

“By faith . . .”

Esther

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BORN TO A captive life, alienated from the Promised Land, orphaned in youth, yet raised in a moment to become the most exalted woman in Persia, the beautiful Esther is a remarkable picture of faith manifested in humble obedience to God’s will. We can hardly imagine that the circumstances in which she became the principal wife of the king of Persia mirror the marriage aspirations of the average young sister in Christ. Yet it is Esther’s willing submission to the Father’s will in her life for which we truly know her and love her. Deprived of both parents, Esther came under the guardianship of her cousin Mordecai, who must have imparted to the young Esther a deep-seated faith in the God of Israel, which was to be tried so intensely on her elevation to the throne.

When Esther was called to the preparation house of the women, her former life and aspirations ceased to exist, and she faced a most uncertain future. Only one woman could be chosen to be the king’s wife, whilst the rest were to fade into oblivion within the royal compounds. She had a year to contemplate this turn of events prior to her day of personal judgement before the king. How tempting it would have been to use every human stratagem to try to please the king according to fleshly principles! It is a most remarkable act of faith that Esther, wise beyond her years, accepted the advice of the king’s chamberlain and presented herself in simplicity and purity of character.

Exalted to become queen beside the most powerful man upon the earth, her position was nevertheless tenuous. She knew too well the circumstances surrounding the removal of the former queen. Every action needed to be weighed and measured, the door of her mouth guarded. And all the while she was removed from the company of any of her own nation and faith.

So concerned was Mordecai for her welfare that he forbade her even to disclose that she was a Jewess. Only the depth of character which already existed from the careful preparation of youth, and an abiding belief in the merciful presence of God in her life, could have sustained her throughout this period. The faith of many has crumpled in less

challenging circumstances, when God seemed far removed from the affairs of everyday life.

The hostility of Haman towards Mordecai brought to a head the festering anti-Semitism that was rife in sections of the government. The king, unaware of Esther’s allegiance, came frighteningly under the influence of the evil enemy of the Jews. How Esther’s heart must have been torn! How could she intervene and challenge his trust in his favoured prince, and yet not incur his wrath? Failure might result not only in personal danger for herself and Mordecai, but in worse persecution for her people. An additional difficulty lay in the fact that Persian law prevented the king from changing his mind concerning any of his decrees, even if he could be persuaded to do so.

In the wise counsel of Mordecai to Esther at this time we see his appeal that she recognise the hand of God in her elevation to the throne. Was it mere chance that she alone had survived the selection process to come to the throne, where she may now have some influence upon the monarch? Mordecai’s determined belief that God would not abandon His people in their time of trial was so strong that he pointed out that, if Esther failed, deliverance would come from another source, but not necessarily in time to save her or her kin. His appeal led her to the beautiful recognition that, in light of the providence God had already exercised in her life, she needed to use the circumstances in which she found herself to benefit His chosen people, without regard for her own safety.

“If I perish, I perish”. These simple words express Esther’s conviction that we do not live our lives for the present. Our present circumstances, whatever they might be, need to be used as a vehicle to allow God’s will to be done. We may not always know the means by which God chooses to fulfil His will, but we do know that, if we act in faith, we will be blessed at our ultimate end. Esther’s joy at God’s deliverance was shortly to become a reality in her life. Many of us will not know the end results of our acts of faith until the judgement seat. But, as we contemplate the remarkable life of Esther and her special challenges, we believe that God is very near to those who put their trust in Him.