

Esther 4:10-17

Esther 4:10-17 Then Esther spoke to Hathach, and gave him a command for Mordecai: (11) “All the king’s servants and the people of the king’s provinces know that any man or woman who goes into the inner court to the king, who has not been called, he has but one law: put all to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden sceptre, that he may live. Yet I myself have not been called to go in to the king these thirty days.” (12) So they told Mordecai Esther’s words. (13) And Mordecai told them to answer Esther: “Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king’s palace any more than all the other Jews. (14) For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (15) Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai: (16) “Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!” (17) So Mordecai went his way and did according to all that Esther commanded him.

Questions On The Text

How did Esther respond to Mordecai’s command?

Verses 10-12: Queen Esther naturally responded with fear. No one was permitted into the king’s inner court unless summoned by the king himself. To do so meant to be put to death. The only exception to this law was if the king extended his golden sceptre.

Esther’s predicament was aggravated by the fact that Ahasuerus had not called for her for thirty days, an indication that she may not currently be in the king’s favour to the degree that she once was.

What was Mordecai’s advice to Esther?

Verses 13-14: These are the key verses of the Book of Esther. Mordecai reminded Esther of three things. First, that since she was a Jew, there was no reason for her to assume that she would be able to escape the consequences of Haman’s decree. Even as queen, she was still subject to it.

Second, if she failed to petition the king on behalf of her people, God (who is not explicitly mentioned) would cause deliverance for the Jews to arise from elsewhere, but Esther and her family would perish. Third, Mordecai urged her to consider the possibility that her role in the current crisis might well be the reason she had been made queen.

What was Esther’s decision?

Verses 15-17: Esther decided to act on Mordecai’s words, resigned to the possibility that she may lose her life. In return, she expected the support of the Jews in Shushan. Mordecai was instructed to gather the Jews to fast for three days on her behalf. In addition, she and her maids would fast.

Fasting was normally only for one day, so a three day fast was in keeping with the severity of the situation. Although not mentioned, fasting was normally accompanied by prayer. So at risk of her life, Esther determined to petition the king for her people, while on his part, having received the command of the queen, Mordecai went his way to organise the fast.

Further Questions For Discussion:

Was Esther’s fear a rational response?

Should a believer be afraid of death?

What do you think of Mordecai's statement that relief and deliverance would come even if Esther refused to get involved? What was the basis of his confidence?

In view of Mordecai's suggestion that Esther might have come to the kingdom specifically for this moment, can you think of other instances when people have been in the right place at the right time and influenced the course of history?

Esther called for a three-day fast among the Jews in the capital. What place does fasting have in contemporary Christian faith?