

the courage of a queen

esther risks her life

Selections from Esther

The story of Esther begins in 483 B.C., about one hundred years after Nebuchadnezzar had taken the Jews into captivity. Queen Vashti refuses an order from her husband, King Xerxes, and is subsequently banished. The king sends out a decree to gather together all beautiful virgins in the empire as he begins the search for a new queen.

Esther, a young Jewish woman, is one chosen to be in his new royal harem. King Xerxes is so pleased with her that he makes her his queen.

Haman, a self-serving man, is appointed second-in-command in the empire as prime minister. Haman becomes enraged when Mordecai, Esther's cousin, refuses to bow in reverence to him. Haman plots to destroy Mordecai and all the Jews along with him.

▶ Read Esther 3:8-11.

- ▶ What were the results of pride and hatred in Haman's life?

When Mordecai heard about this decree, he went into public mourning by putting on sackcloth and ashes and crying out bitterly. When Esther heard of this, she sent a messenger named Hathach to find out what was wrong. Through the messenger Mordecai asked Esther to plead with the king for their people.

▶ Read Esther 4:9-16.

- ▶ What would Esther be risking by approaching the king uninvited?

▶ Read Esther 5:1-3.

- ▶ What kind of temptation do you think Esther could have faced at this point?

In response to the king's offer, Esther invited Xerxes and Haman to a banquet. She combined her courage with careful planning as she invited these key people to her banquet. There she exposed Haman's treachery, and he was hung on the very gallows he prepared for Mordecai.

The same day Esther makes another request of the king.

▶ Read Esther 8:5-8.

- ▶ Who is Esther clearly identifying herself with here?

Esther 3:8-11

⁸Then Haman said to King Xerxes, "There is a certain people dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom who keep themselves separate. Their customs are different from those of all other people, and they do not obey the king's laws; it is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them. ⁹If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them, and I will give ten thousand talents of silver to the king's administrators for the royal treasury." ¹⁰So the king took his signet ring from his finger and gave it to Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. ¹¹"Keep the money," the king said to Haman, "and do with the people as you please."

Esther 4:9-16

⁹Hathach went back and reported to Esther what Mordecai had said. ¹⁰Then she instructed him to say to Mordecai, ¹¹"All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that they be put to death unless the king extends the gold scepter to them and spares their lives. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king."

¹²When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, ¹³he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. ¹⁴For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"

¹⁵Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: ¹⁶"Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."

Esther 5:1-3

¹On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the king's hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall, facing the entrance. ²When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand. So Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter. ³Then the king asked, "What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you."

Esther 8:5-8

⁵"If it pleases the king," she said, "and if he regards me with favor and thinks it the right thing to do, and if he is pleased with me, let an order be written overruling the dispatches that Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, devised and wrote to destroy the Jews in all the king's provinces. ⁶For how can I bear to see disaster fall on my people? How can I bear to see the destruction of my family?"

⁷King Xerxes replied to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, "Because Haman attacked the Jews, I have given his estate to Esther, and they have impaled him on the pole he set up. ⁸Now write another decree in the king's name in behalf of the Jews as seems best to you, and seal it with the king's signet ring—for no document written in the king's name and sealed with his ring can be revoked."

»mon

Tape this verse to your locker today so you can look at it every day this week. Turn to God to strengthen you when you feel "dismayed."

»tues

What does it mean to you that God is with you? Ask God to increase your awareness of His presence in you. Keep a journal this week of times you've realized that God is with you.

»wed

God's hand is not only righteous, it's awesome. Check out the following verses: Exodus 15:6; Psalm 98:1; Isaiah 48:13; 2 Chronicles 6:4. What has God's hand done for us?

»thurs

Read on in Isaiah 41 through verse 13. God wants to take hold of your right hand! Consciously put your hand in His today.

»fri

There's more awesomeness about the hand of God. Read Psalm 63:7-8; Isaiah 49:16; and John 10:28. What do you learn about yourself if you are a Christian? Praise God for His preserving power.

»sat

How has God helped you and strengthened you this week? Spend some time thanking Him; then quietly go and tell someone who needs His strength.

So do not fear,
for I am with you;
do not be dismayed,
for I am your God. I
will strengthen you
and help you; I will
uphold you with
my righteous right
hand.

Isaiah 41:10

THE PRAYER OF SAINT PATRICK'S BREASTPLATE

I arise today
Through a mighty strength, the invocation
of the Trinity,
Through the belief in the threeness,
Through confession of the oneness
Of the Creator of Creation.

I arise today
Through the strength of heaven:
Light of sun,
Radiance of moon,
Splendor of fire,
Speed of lightning,
Swiftness of wind,
Depth of sea,
Stability of earth,
Firmness of rock.

I arise today
Through God's strength to pilot me:
God's might to uphold me,
God's wisdom to guide me,
God's eye to look before me,
God's ear to hear me,

God's word to speak for me,
God's hand to guard me,
God's way to lie before me,
God's shield to protect me,
God's host to save me
From snares of devils,
From temptations of vices,
From everyone who shall wish me ill,
Afar and anear,
Alone and in multitude.

I summon today all these powers between me and
those evils,
Against every cruel merciless power that may
oppose my body and soul,
Against incantations of false prophets,
Against black laws of pagandom
Against false laws of heretics,
Against craft of idolatry,

Against spells of witches and smiths and wizards,
Against every knowledge that corrupts man's body
and soul.

Christ to shield me today
Against poison, against burning,
Against drowning, against wounding,
So that there may come to me abundance of reward.

Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,
Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down,
Christ when I arise,
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.