

# Queen for A Day Such as This

Studies in the Book of Esther

## *"An Outing at the Palace"*

### Introduction

"Providence" is something we believe in but don't fully understand.

All of the definitions are a little different. I like this one:

"Providence is the act of seeing and providing or preparing for the future, and biblically refers to God's foresight and power to watch over and protect and provide for His creatures."

It's a good definition for several reasons:

1. It takes into account both *foresight* and *providing*, which are the meanings of the two roots from which providence, as a word, is formed.
2. It specifically mentions its biblical use.
3. It doesn't go too far theologically in terms of deciding exactly how providence is manifested.

My paraphrase of biblical providence would be, "providence is God seeing to it that His plan for the future stays on track in the present."

Theologians can go to the extremes in discussing and describing providence:

- One extreme is called *omnicausality*, which says that God **causes your every action** in such a way as to **determine** completely its nature and outcome.
- The other extreme is *open theism*, the teaching that God has granted to humanity free will and that in order for the free will to be truly free, **the future free will choices of individuals cannot be known ahead of time by God.**

I may be oversimplifying, but that's about right, and I'm guessing most, if not all, of us think that the true answer must be somewhere in the middle, where I am no mere robot of *omnicausality*, but where God definitely remains *omniscient*.

We may not be able to explain in a totally satisfactory way the relationship of free will and God's providence, but we can see it everywhere in the Bible, and nowhere more clearly than in Esther.

Esther 4:1 When Mordecai learned all that had happened, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city. He cried out with a loud and bitter cry.  
 Esther 4:2 He went as far as the front of the king's gate, for no one might enter the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.

I almost wish we would adopt the practice of tearing our clothes and putting on sackcloth and ashes. It would completely eliminate our sometimes empty greetings that ask, "How are you doing?"

Sackcloth was forbidden in the palace. They wanted to maintain the façade that everything was awesome.

Esther lived in the very lap of luxury – so much so that she had no idea what was happening right outside her very doors.

Esther 4:3 And in every province where the king's command and decree arrived, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

This wasn't just wearing a pin or a ribbon or a bracelet to promote your cause. You put on a whole outfit of mourning, then threw ashes over your head. It was a total commitment to grieving.

Esther 4:4 So Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her, and the queen was deeply distressed. Then she sent garments to clothe Mordecai and take his sackcloth away from him, but he would not accept them.

Apparently Esther could not leave the palace. As queen, she was confined within its walls. She was a prisoner of luxury. The Holy Spirit is establishing the emptiness and shallowness of living comfortably.

Esther 4:5 Then Esther called Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs whom he had appointed to attend her, and she gave him a command concerning Mordecai, to learn what and why this was.

Esther 4:6 So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the city square that was in front of the king's gate.

Esther 4:7 And Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries to destroy the Jews.

Esther 4:8 He also gave him a copy of the written decree for their destruction, which was given at Shushan, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her, and that he might command her to go in to the king to make supplication to him and plead before him for her people.

Esther 4:9 So Hathach returned and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

Mordecai boldly called upon Esther to intercede on behalf of the Jews.

When we think of interceding, or intercession, we think of a type of praying. Here we see that intercession calls for involvement of some kind. When you pray for someone, you'd better be ready to get involved with them as well. **You** are often the answer, or part of the answer, to your own prayers for them.

The world is abounding with Mordecai's. There are needs upon needs. Most of us, here in the United States, are Esther's. We're pretty comfortable; we're pretty insulated. We don't always know or care what is going on just outside our gates.

Are we willing to go before our King and intercede on behalf of those who have need? Are we then willing to get involved?

**Of course we are.** How could we live in luxury, ignoring the needs outside our walls, if Jesus is really our passion and purpose for living?

Esther 4:10 Then Esther spoke to Hathach, and gave him a command for Mordecai:

Esther 4:11 "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 scepter, that he may live. Yet I myself have not been called to go in to the king these thirty days."

Esther 4:12 So they told Mordecai Esther's words.

Esther was trying to convince Mordecai, and herself, that there was nothing she could do in this situation. In her case, it was because of the very real danger of execution.

Do we ever look at some situation and say, "There's nothing we can do; it's too dangerous, or too difficult." **We need to factor in God.**

Esther 4:13 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.

Did you catch the significance of what Mordecai just said? He hinted at it, in verse eight, calling the maybe 15 million Persian Jews her "people." But that might simply mean they were citizens of Persia whom Queen Esther ought to care for.

You've heard of the term, 'outing.' It is most commonly used to describe the act of disclosing a person's sexual orientation or gender identity without that person's consent.

*Mordecai just outed Esther as a Jew.* It would have been a shock to her servants.

We occasionally need shock-treatment. Call it shock-treatment for God's elect... Or "elect-shock treatment."

We need to hear something, or see something, that causes us to say to ourselves, "Hey! I'm a Christian! I need to act; I need to get involved."

Esther 4:14 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?"

Mordecai believed in divine providence. He knew God must intervene, because God had made unconditional promises to Abraham about his descendants, and especially that through the Jews the Savior of the world would be provided.

It doesn't mean he was saved. You can believe in providence as a force without having faith. Even today, people look upon Israel and acknowledge providence is at work - even though they are mostly in unbelief of Jesus.

Though some may argue, I see Mordecai and Esther as free agents, making bad, wrong choices, but God by His providence, providing for His plan without violating their free will.

This is not omnicausality. You can't really say God made Esther queen for just this moment, because if you do, you make God complicit with her sin. It was her free choice to enter the queen-search, to partake of forbidden foods and rituals, to commit fornication with the king, and then to marry him - all *against* the stated will of God.

There she was, though, and if she came clean about her heritage, God could use her.

If not... God could have worked in other ways; Mordecai said as much himself. Esther was free to choose; God would act regardless, to provide for His plan to have the Savior of the world be born a Jew.

You might have made some bad decisions; you might be where you are because of disobedience to God. Wherever you are today – God can use you in a powerful way.

I emphasize: This does not give you an excuse to make bad decisions, or stay in the wrong place, with the wrong people. Greg Laurie tweeted, "When you hang out with the wrong people in the wrong places you will soon do the wrong things."

Esther 4:15 Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai:

Esther 4:16 "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!"

Esther 4:17 So Mordecai went his way and did according to all that Esther commanded him.

Esther goes from being a closet-Jew to calling for a fast - not just for herself, but for all the Jews and her own servants.

Listen: When you decide to repent and return to walking with God, *just go for it*. Don't be weighed down by the things which have gone before. Get up to spiritual speed in a heartbeat.

Esther counted the cost and was willing to pay it. She would lose her life if it came to it. But she would lose it serving God – and, thus, she had found her life.

The cost of discipleship is nothing less than your life. But in losing your life, you find it. The risk is always cancelled-out by the reward.

Something else to consider: Esther was going to lose her life anyway. She had been outed as a Jew, and would therefore be killed when the day of slaughter came.

Living in comfort is always a mirage. Live that way, surrounded by or at least pursuing the material world, and you will lose your life anyway, and have nothing to show for it in the end.

Mordecai and Esther had exercised their free will and defied the will of God. Mordecai brought this crisis upon himself, and upon his people, due to his pride.

I simply cannot accept that God led them both to sin in order to get her to be queen so she could save her people.

They chose; and God overruled. Had they finally refused to walk in God's will, "relief and deliverance for the Jews" would have come some other way.

God's will, **will** be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. But you are free to choose.

Maybe this illustration will help. Every parent wants their child or children to make the right choices. Good parenting teaches children to think for themselves to come to the right choices. It gives them room to make mistakes, and to learn from those mistakes.

But good parenting also sees to it, as much as is humanly possible, that children do not make foolish, even fatal, mistakes. You step in and exert your will for their greater good. The kids remain free, but their freedom is curtailed so that the parents get their way.

God is your heavenly Father and wants you to obey Him, for your own good. He's given you freedom, but will act providentially when necessary, to see that all things work together for the good for you as His child.