

Esther

If I Perish, I Perish

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October 15, 2016, Ladies' Retreat
Text: Overview of Esther

“For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14)

Outline

- I. First, God **guides** us in times of silence.
Pray **faithfully** in the silence!
- II. Second, God **grows** us in times of crisis.
Pray **fervently** in the crisis!
- III. Third, God **empowers** us in times of weakness.
Pray **courageously** in times of weakness!
- IV. Finally, remember God **blesses** us when we trust Him in faith.
Pray **thankfully** in always!

Introduction

Open your Bible to the book of Esther. The title of our message is “Prayer in Times of Crisis and Suffering.” What we are going to see this morning is that the more you are surrendered to God, the more you are going to be used as an instrument for His service. The less surrendered you are, the less you will be used of God.

Admiral James Stockdale

Admiral James Stockdale is well known for being the Vice Presidential Candidate for the third party with Ross Perot in 1992. His opening words to the Vice Presidential debate were, “Who am I, and why am I here?”

In the book of Esther, we meet a girl who loses her parents, is taken out of the Jewish culture and loses her culture, and finds out why she is on this earth.

Who are you and why are you here?

Who are you and why are you here? Often suffering and crisis make us forget who we are. That is not the case with Esther. She never forgets who she is.

We know who we are if we are in Christ. The book of Ephesians tells us no matter where I am or what is happening in my life, I can say:

- I am complete in Him Who is the Head of all principality and power (Colossians 2:10).

- I am alive with Christ (Ephesians 2:5).
- I am free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2).
- I am holy and without blame before Him in love (Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:16).
- I am chosen by God (Eph. 1:4).
- I have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16; Philippians 2:5).
- I have access to the peace of God that passes all understanding (Philippians 4:7).
- I have the Greater One living in me; greater is He Who is in me than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4).
- I am God's child for I am born again of the incorruptible seed of the Word of God, which lives and abides forever (1 Peter 1:23).
- I am God's workmanship, created in Christ unto good works (Ephesians 2:10).
- I am a new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).
- I am a joint-heir with Christ (Romans 8:17).
- I am more than a conqueror through Him Who loves me (Romans 8:37).
- I am a partaker of His divine nature (2 Peter 1:3-4).
- I am part of a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people (1 Peter 2:9).
- I am made righteous in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21).
- I am the temple of the Holy Spirit; I am not my own (1 Corinthians 6:19).
- I am His elect, full of mercy, kindness, humility, and longsuffering (Romans 8:33; Colossians 3:12).
- I am forgiven of all my sins and washed in the Blood (Ephesians 1:7).

- I am delivered from the power of darkness and translated into God's kingdom (Colossians 1:13).

We are all called to be used in God's service.

Jesus said, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mt 16:18).

Winston Churchill, an unlikely Leader

Winston Churchill, the great Prime Minister of Britain, has been called the most valuable figure in all of humanity for the 20th century. He achieved such greatness—he led the western world through World War II, and stood up to Hitler's Nazi army and won.

But Churchill was a very ordinary man. He was an academic failure. His father gave up on him having any success in business and told him to join the army. While in the army he became a very successful war correspondent as well as a valiant soldier. He received many medals for valor and bravery. But here is a man that was a very ordinary person, and he kept pushing forward. He was an ordinary man with an extraordinary passion.

Through faithfulness and zeal, Churchill was elected Prime Minister and led the Great Britain and the world through "the War to End All Wars". Though the future looked dark for Great Britain, Churchill was used of God to deliver them and the western world. I want to introduce you to a very unlikely candidate to be used of God to transform the very history of the world.

A Dark Future for Israel

Around 3000 years ago, the future looked as dark as ever for another nation, the Jewish nation. They faced extermination. They had no apparent political or economic power, and no voice or vote before the King of the ancient world, the Persian **King Xerxes I**.

But was going to do something amazing and exalt a young Jewish girl named Esther to a place of the highest power in the ancient world.

I. First, God **guides us in times of silence.**

Pray faithfully in the silence!

Esther's parents are gone, and she lives with her uncle. She is in a strange land and it seems that God is silent.

Do you ever feel that way? Do you feel at times that God is distracted and that He's forgotten about you?

We find a similar situation in the life of Esther. Who could have guessed that this young Jewish girl would be exalted to the position of Queen? God may seem silent in our suffering, but God is never truly silent.

God Guides All Things by His Plan

All events and circumstances are guided by God to bring about His perfect plan. One example is how Esther became Queen of Persia.

In Esther 1, we are introduced to the great and powerful King Ahasuerus, also known as Xerxes I. **Esther 1:1-3**, “Now in the days of Ahasuerus, the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia over 127 provinces, 2 in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on his royal throne in Susa, the capital, 3 in the third year of his reign he gave a feast for all his officials and servants. The army of Persia and Media and the nobles and governors of the provinces were before him”.

The year is 485, and Xerxes is 39 years old. He rules from Asia to Africa. This is just before his epic battle against Greece later that year. He’s got his nobles and generals, and is very likely feasting before they go out to war.

1. Vashti is dethroned as Queen (chapter 1)

In **Esther 1:11-12**, we find after seven days of feasting, King Xerxes summoned 7 of his eunuchs to “...bring Queen Vashti before the king with her royal crown, in order to show the peoples and the princes her beauty, for she was lovely to look at. 12 But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king’s command delivered by the eunuchs. At this the king became enraged, and his anger burned within him.”

The author does not explain why **Vashti refused to come**, probably because the reasons were irrelevant: even the queen was expected to obey the king absolutely.

Everybody was mad. We read in **Esther 1:16**, one of the eunuchs named “Memucan said in the presence of the king and the officials, “Not only against the king has Queen Vashti done wrong, but also against all the officials and all the peoples who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus.”

And so he went on in **Esther 1:19**, “If it please the king, let a royal order go out from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes so that it may not be repealed, that Vashti is never again to come before King Ahasuerus. And let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she.”

2. A Search for a New Queen Begins (chapter 2:1-15)

So this set into ut the entire kingdom, from India to Africa, from East to West, and a selection of the most beautiful virgins of marryable age are brought to Susa in Persia, the capital of the world.

We read in **Esther 2:4**, “And let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti.” This pleased the king, and he did so..”

Sovereignly, Esther was placed at the very epicenter of the world. Why was this important?

Enter Mordecai! What do we know about him?

Esther 2:7-8, “He was bringing up Hadassah, that is Esther, the daughter of his uncle, for she had neither father nor mother. The young woman had a beautiful figure and was lovely to look at, and when her father and her mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter. 8 So when the king’s order and his edict were proclaimed, and when many young women were gathered in Susa the citadel in custody of Hegai, Esther also was taken into the king’s palace and put in custody of Hegai, who had charge of the women.”

Because of the almost universal prejudice against the Jewish people and for Esther’s own preservation, her wise uncle Mordecai instructed her not to make her ethnicity known to the king. **Esther 2:10; cf. 20**, “Esther had not made known her people or kindred, for Mordecai had commanded her not to make it known.”

3. Esther Becomes Queen (2:16-23)

Esther 2:16-17, “And when Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus into his royal palace in the tenth month, which is the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign, 17 the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she won grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.”

Mordecai the Hero, Esther 2:19-23

In the meantime, two of the eunuchs conspire to kill the king, and Mordecai overhears it and tells Esther. Through Esther, King Xerxes is informed and Mordecai’s heroic deed was recorded.

Enter Haman! Esther 3:1-6

In time, King Xerxes promoted Haman the son of Hammedatha over all the princes of Persia. All were to bow down to Haman when they saw him. Apparently, Mordecai, Esther’s uncle, knew something about Haman. Haman was an **Amalekite**, -specifically an Agagaite – the bitter enemies of the Jewish people. Haman was a proud man who was driven to rage by Mordecai’s refusal to bow before him (3:5). This rage led Haman to seek the destruction of every Jew throughout the entire kingdom of Ahasuerus (3:6).

The Scriptures report that Haman was as clever as he was evil. He deceived King Ahasuerus into believing that the Jews were a danger to his rule and that he should seal an irreversible decree that would legalize their total annihilation (3:15). The necessary papers were drawn up, signed, sealed, and sent to every province of Persia. Haman gloated in his power and rejoiced in the soon coming destruction of the Jews. There was nothing to stop him.

And so Esther is given such privilege. She was an ordinary person. Yet God elevated her to be Queen.

B. We Have Been Given Privilege and Position

It cannot be denied that the Christian in the West has been given great privilege and position. By God’s sovereign design, the Church in the United States as well as Canada,

and Western Europe enjoys the greatest religious freedom, the greatest access to Scripture and theological resources, the greatest economic power, and the greatest open doors to do missions around the world.

For several decades, religious freedom has been the boast of the West. A man is free to believe as he chooses and to practice his religious convictions so long as they do not infringe upon the rights of others. Although this freedom is coming under increasing attack, we are still granted more freedom to practice our faith than any other group of Christians in the history of the world.

Christians in the West have more **Bibles**, theological **resources**, and access to **theological institutions** than all the other Christians living outside the West combined. The West abounds with Christian **publishers** and **printers**, Christian **bookstores** and media corporations, Christian **schools**, **colleges**, and **seminaries**.

We have the greatest economy in the history of the world. Although the poor are found even in the most affluent societies, most sociologists and economists will say: "***If you live in the West you are rich.***" Comparing the West with the rest of the world, most of which is undeveloped, the differences are staggering.

Christians in the West have been given the greatest open door of opportunity for missions that the world has ever seen. In God's overall plan, you are in a strategic place to serve. In His providence, God has opened a tremendous door for world missions.

Are you aware of the great privileges you have that God chose for you? You are a believer. You have a Bible. You are rich.

Like Esther, you are in a very privileged place!!

II. Second, God **grows** us in times of crisis.

Pray fervently in the crisis!

God is growing you, and you must step up to the challenges in life!

God had exalted Esther to a place of privilege and she was responsible to use her life as an instrument of blessing and salvation for her people. The same God holds all of us to the same responsibility.

Esther 4:14, "...if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Esther had a responsibility to speak up and save her people.

Application: Jesus soundly declared a principle that will be applied on the final day of His judgment – "To whom much is given, much is required" (**Luke 12:48**).

Are you engaged in your place of service? Are you faithful to all the church services? Are you leading any ministry? Are you willing to do anything? Most of the time you will not be asked.

2 Timothy 1:6, “Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up [fan into flame] the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.”

Personal Testimony: Twenty years ago I had just been saved. I had nothing special about me. I was failing out of school, in trouble with the law. Who ever knew I could learn another language and go plant a church in another country? Who knew I would plant a Spanish church here in the States within our own church? I learned what it was to “fan into flame” the gifts God gave me. ***That meant I needed to get involved and be ready to stumble and fail if necessary.***

“To whom much is given, much is required” (Luke 12:48).

One day we will stand before Christ. Are you squandering opportunities that you could be involved in?

- In evangelism?
- In mentoring?
- In multi-cultural evangelism?
- In your church?
- In the life of a young person?

We have also been given all the necessary resources to do His will. Can we not see that we will be judged in a greater way than our brothers and sisters of lesser advantage? God has **not** given us our exalted place and innumerable resources **because He loves us more than them**, or so that we might selfishly use and hoard all He has given us for ourselves. God has blessed us so that we might be a blessing to others. He has equipped us so that we might be His ministers to a needy world.

III. Third, God **empowers** us in times of weakness.

Pray courageously in times of weakness!

2 Cor 4:7-11, 16-18, “But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. 8 We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. 11 For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 12 So death is at work in us, but life in you...”

“16 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self[d] is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. 17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 as we look not to the things that

are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”

Esther needs to go before the king and inform him of Haman’s plan! And she is willing. She asks Mordecai to have all the Jews in Susa pray and fast for three days and nights. And her statement of surrender is epic in **verse 16**, “I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and **if I perish, I perish.**”

The People were Led to Fast and Pray

A. Prayer is the only answer to our weakness.

Esther 4:13-16, “Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, “Do not think to yourself that in the king’s palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. 14 For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows whether you have not 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 to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf**, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and **if I perish, I perish.**”

Esther knew she was dispensable.

B. ***We Are Dispensable.*** Esther had been exalted to the necessary position and she possessed all the necessary resources to save her people. If she sought her own self preservation above the saving of her people, it would not have brought God’s plan to a tragic end. God is sovereign over all things and He is directing His world to a final end. Nothing can thwart His plan, including the disobedience of His people.

With regard to the Great Commission, God has exalted the Church in the West to the necessary position and she possesses all the necessary resources to fulfill the Great Commission.

C. ***God’s plan is fixed.*** If Western Christians continues to live in apathy and disobedience it will be tragic for her, but not for the work of God.

- Jesus said: “I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mt 16:18).
- God will make His Name great among the nations (Malachi 1:11).
- He will give the nations to His Son as an inheritance (Psalm 2:8).
- There will be a multitude of people standing before the throne worshipping God from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation (Revelation 5:9).

You as an American Christian are not God's only hope, for He does not hope in man. God has sworn by His own right hand to do a great work in the world and He will do it with, or without us.

Like Mordecai told **Esther in 4:14**, "If you are silent, God will bring deliverance from somewhere else, but you will be destroyed. How do you know you haven't been raised up in this kingdom FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS."

"Only one life 'twill soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last".

Christ will build His church, with or without you! God does not need us, but He has granted us the privilege of working in the Great Commission. Let us not despise such a privilege and bring such great tragedy upon our lives.

D. We will all give an account to God.

Rom. 14:10, "we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."

If we as individual Christians and collectively as the Church continue to live in apathy and disobedience to the Great Commission, the loss will be ours. Let's consider in our last point, what we will lose if we pass up the opportunity to serve God in this time of great privilege and blessing.

IV. Finally, remember God blesses us when we trust Him in faith.

Pray thankfully in always!

You know what happened in the end of Esther's story. Esther spoke up, and Haman, the enemy of the Jews was put to death on the very gallows he was going to use to execute Mordecai and all of the Jews. The king protected the Jews. God saved His people. Today, God is going to save His people.

Esther 4:14, "...if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Esther 8:3, "Esther spoke again to the king. She fell at his feet and wept and pleaded with him to avert the evil plan of Haman the Agagite and the plot that he had devised against the Jews."

What was the king's response? **Esther 8:7-8**, "Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, "Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows, because he intended to lay hands on the Jews. 8 But you may write as you please with regard to the Jews, in the name of the king, and seal it with the king's ring, for an edict written in the name of the king and sealed with the king's ring cannot be revoked."

What will we lose if we choose to disobey God's will in our place of service?

- **1 - We will lose our eternal purpose.** *Your life will become meaningless and empty.* You and I were created for God's good pleasure and for the doing of His will. To turn away from what God has ordained will only lead to chaos and meaninglessness in our lives. A guitar is made for music and a bow for shooting an arrow straight.

You cannot hunt with a guitar anymore than you can lead worship with a bow. Each instrument is made for a certain purpose, and it is in fulfilling that purpose that it discovers its significance and worth. As Christians we were made to bring glory and honor to the Lord, and we have been commanded to carry His Gospel to the ends of the earth. We will find significance and discover worth only to the degree that we fulfill this purpose.

- **2 - We will lose the fruit of our labors.**
How many professing Christians are truly living for that which is eternal? How many are laboring for the fruit that will remain? What a tragedy to live one's life for things that will be lost at death, things not worthy of eternity. It seems as though we have traded our royal inheritance and our exalted position as ambassadors of God, in order to work as slaves in the world's market place. We spend our lives and our resources to buy trinkets and toys that cannot satisfy us and will eventually turn to dust.
- **3 - We will lose the pleasure of God's presence and power.**
It is impossible to experience God's presence and power when we are chasing after the world and its lusts. Can you recall those times when you have walked in obedience to God and His commands? Do you remember the joy and peace that accompanied you? Can you remember the Father's good pleasure when you were about the Father's business? Was it not better than anything that the world could ever afford to give? Heaven is heaven, not because of streets of gold or gates of pearl, but because of the nearness of God. That same nearness has been promised to us here on earth. When we walk with God, He walks with us. When we give ourselves to the doing of His will in the Great Commission, He gives Himself to us. Some of the most difficult, frightening, and lonely times I have ever suffered were on the mission field, and yet I would not trade them for all the pleasures of this world. For in my suffering for the cause of Christ and the spreading of His Gospel, the presence of God was my constant companion, and His power was my ever-present help.
- **4 - We will lose the joy of self-giving servanthood.**
Amy Carmichael wrote that above all things the work of missions is a "chance to die." The Great Commission requires sacrifice, self-giving, and servanthood. The three things that this world distains and we as Christians often try to avoid; and yet, they are the three things that will bring a person the greatest joy, peace, and satisfaction. Jesus told us that the way to true success was found, not by climbing up the ladder, but by climbing down it! When we give our lives away for the sake

of Christ, for the sake of His Gospel, and for the sake of the people for whom He died, our lives are filled with joy!

- **5 - We will lose the joy of seeing the salvation of God in the lives of men.**

What spectacle in the world can compare to a man's conversion? What a wonderful privilege to see the salvation of the lost and to participate in their newly found joy. No joy can be compared to that of reaching the unreached, distributing the Bible among those who have never had the privilege to own a copy of their own, feeding the poor, clothing the hungry, restoring families, etc. etc. Let gold and silver turn to rust, and let the world keep its own. I would rather be an instrument in the conversion of men. Those who have followed the call of Christ in the Great Commission have no need of "Christian Entertainment". They need nothing to amuse them, to break their boredom, or fill their time. The spectacle of salvation is all they desire to behold, and the doing of God's will keeps them "entertained." Tozer once said that he could tell how much God a man had by how much entertainment he needed. Is it possible that individual Christians and the Church as a whole have become so terribly engrossed with entertainment because they are no longer about the Master's business? Are we so empty because we know nothing of true food – the doing of the Father's will?

- **6 - We will lose the joy of celebration on that final day.**

What joy there will be on that final day when all the re-deemed from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation are gathered before the throne of God. When that great trumpet blows, those who plowed will lay down their plow, those who sowed will lay down their bag of seed, those who harvested will lay down their sickle, and all of the workers in God's field will be called home to celebrate the harvest. How good it will be to rest from all our labors and to see the fruit of all our toil. But rest is not sweet to those who have not labored, and there is no harvest for those who have not toiled. The one who played at the time of sowing and slept at the time of reaping will find little joy. Those who sought to gather souls for God will receive their reward in seeing a multitude that cannot be counted standing before the throne and worshipping God. But those who lived for the things of this world will see them burned up in the fire of God's judgment.

Conclusion: When I was lost, so many people came and told me the Gospel. God used all of them. God had a plan to draw me to Christ. He raise up many people to tell me the Good News. I'm sure sadly, some Christians disobeyed. But God spoke to others who had the privilege to point me to Christ. They have an eternal reward and fruit that will never die.

Will you step up to the plate and say, "If I perish, I perish"? Let us be "a living sacrifice". Christ has made us alive.

Let us sacrifice all that stands in our way and labor with all our might in the Great Commission of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Let us use our privileges for the sake of

Christ and for the sake of those who have not received as abundantly as we. Let us heed Mordecai's warning to Esther. God will save a people for Himself out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation. He will do it with or without our help, but He has graciously called us to be participants in His great work of salvation. Let us be careful not to despise so great a privilege. When our name is called, let us rise up quickly and stand at attention. Let us be ready for every good work. Let us put our hand to the plow and not turn back. A great door has been opened unto us, but we should not think that it will remain open forever. We must work while it is still day, for night comes when no man will be able to work.

Brothers and sisters, God has worked in our lives so that we might be the instruments used in the salvation of a countless multitude of people. If we sleep through the sowing and are distracted during the harvest, God will still accomplish His work in the world, but we will lose too much to write in words. If we turn our eyes toward the fields and put our hand to the plow, if we sow the good seed to the four corners of the earth, then our gain will be will be immeasurable.