

HOLY DESPERATION

Carter Conlon

In the book of Esther, we see the incredible example of how the holy desperation of one person can change the course of history. Let me set the stage for you. The people of God lost the presence, provision, and protection of their heavenly Father because they dealt lightly with the things of God. As a result, they were conquered, captured, and spent seventy years in Babylon.

Babylon itself was conquered by a nation called Medo-Persia, and King Cyrus eventually allowed the people of God to return home to rebuild the temple and testimony that they had lost on the earth.

When God has a plan for His people, the devil will come up with a counterplan, and it always involves oppression, threats, and even death. This theme is common all the way through history, and we see it in the book of Esther. Imagine, if those who plotted to kill all the Jewish people in that day had been successful, we can conclude that the temple would not have been rebuilt. Jewish history would be entirely different; in fact, it would have affected all of history!

So, what was God's plan to thwart this scheme of darkness? Of course, we typically consider Esther to be the marquee player in this whole story because she was the queen. She prayed, fasted, went before the king, and petitioned him. However, I want to suggest to you that the real hero of this story is a man called Mordecai.

Passing the Baton

Now the Persian king had issued a decree that the people of God should be eliminated. When the story reached Mordecai, a family member of Queen Esther—the wife of the king—he began to intercede.

"[Mordecai] 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. He went as far as the front of the king's gate, for no one might enter the king's gate clothed with sackcloth" (Esther 4:1–2). Here was a man whose heart was gripped with holy desperation, but not for himself. That is where prayer finds its power—when we finally get away from our own struggles and trials. This was not just about "God, save me," but rather "God, save Your people." He was just a lone voice, dressed in sackcloth and ashes, repenting for the sins of his people as much as he knew how.

Notice that Mordecai went as far as he could physically go. In a sense, this was a picture of someone going as far as he could go in his prayer. He was like a runner in a multi-person relay race. He ran as far as he could and then stretched out the baton to someone in his family who was supposed to be the next runner. The problem is, the next runner did not even know that there was a race, let alone that she was supposed to be the closer of this race! Unfortunately, this is exactly what can happen to us.

“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. 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. Then Esther called Hathach, one of the king’s eunuchs whom she had appointed to attend her, and she gave him a command concerning Mordecai, to learn what and why this was” (Esther 4:3–5). In other words, “What is going on with my cousin, Mordecai? Why is he doing this?”

Society was turning against the people of God, leaving them seemingly powerless to defend themselves, and Mordecai simply would not accept any comfort. He had holy desperation in his heart. Perhaps he suspected that something dreadful was about to happen if this situation was not somehow countered by the power of prayer.

“So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the city square that was in front of the king’s gate. 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. 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.

“So Hathach returned and told Esther the words of Mordecai. Then Esther spoke to Hathach and gave a command for Mordecai: ‘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.’

“So they told Mordecai Esther’s words. 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. 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?’” (Esther 4:6–13).

There is a fear in the hearts of many people today that will cause them to draw back and try to preserve themselves. But Mordecai said to Esther, “Don’t be fooled into thinking you will escape because you carve out some nice little niche for yourself.” Likewise, this evil is not going to pass over your house either. You have a choice. You either perish, or you fight and invoke Holy God to do what only He can do.

“Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, ‘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!’ So Mordecai went his way and did according to all that Esther commanded him” (Esther 4:15–17).

Thank God that Esther, through the intercession of Mordecai, seriously took up the burden of prayer, throwing her life into it. She opened the door to God’s plan, God’s provision, and God’s power. She did eventually take the baton, but she took it because somebody else began to pray.

It reminds me of the situation where perhaps one might say, “Nobody in my family is walking with God. I am the only one.” If this is something you identify with, I challenge you to go to the King’s gate. Go with holy desperation. Go with the knowledge that only God can make this happen. You may be surprised when you see who rises up to take the baton in your family.

Access to the King

You see, others will not pray if we do not pray. They will not have a burden if we do not have a burden. It is not enough just to try to push somebody else into the arena. No, we must go to the gate. Remember, all it takes is one person with holy desperation in his or her heart to change history. It is the person who declares, “I am not giving up until God moves. I don’t care who tells me to be quiet. I don’t care if people tell me that I am too extreme!”

Esther came out of that time of fasting and prayer with a wholehearted dependence on God, and God gave her incredible wisdom. I believe the Lord told her when to speak, how to speak, what to speak, and why to speak. When you begin to pray and fast, watch the influence God will start to give you over your family, even if you didn't even know that you were supposed to be in the battle.

Perhaps you have spent most of your life in self-preservation. Your prayers are all about yourself, but today God is challenging you. There is a bigger battle out there, a whole host of people who have no power to defend themselves against evil, and you are in a place where you have access to the throne of the King. They don't; you do. They do not even know that there is a King who would move His scepter forward toward them. They have no knowledge of the goodness of God because they are so distant from the throne of power.

However, you are in a place where you can go to the King, and the King's favor will move toward you. The king said, "Queen Esther, what is it that you would have me do for you?" (see Esther 5:3). You and I both know that Esther was seeking to have this law of sin and death canceled over her people, and a new law written that would give them power to stand up and not only fight back but be victorious.

Remember, it was not just about the people in Medo-Persia at that time. It was about those people who would eventually leave Medo-Persia and return to Israel to rebuild the temple and testimony of God. It was a link in the chain that could not afford to be broken in the redemptive history of God on the earth. Thankfully, this incredible link held, and the people of God were delivered. Families were given the power to stand up and fight back against this onslaught of hell—all because of one man who would not quit—one man with holy desperation in his heart.

Ask for Holy Desperation

If you are going to pray for something today, let it be, "God, give me holy desperation. Give me holy desperation for my family. Give me holy desperation for this generation. Give me holy desperation to see Your power released and the weight of darkness that is trying to swallow a whole society pushed back!"

I encourage you—stay in prayer. Whether it is two minutes, five minutes, ten minutes, fifteen minutes, an hour, it does not matter. Stay and pray until the power

of God comes upon you. Stay and pray until you see clearly what the will of God is for your life. Stay and pray until you know in your heart that God is going to use you to reach your family. Pray for the family of God and your own family to become engaged in the spiritual battles for people today. Pray that your sons, your daughters, your brothers, your sisters, your mom, your dad would all pick up that sword of the Spirit and begin to fight the battles of God.

Pray that those who are cowering would be given courage. Pray for power to stay faithful until the answer comes, as Mordecai did. Pray, pray, pray, and let's believe God together that there is going to be a moment of mercy in this world and an end-time spiritual awakening.

Carter Conlon
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