

## FOR A TIME LIKE THIS

"For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther 4:14.

Our text pictures for us a desperate situation. The time is about 450 years before Christ was born. The place is Susa, the capital of the mighty Persian Empire.

Perhaps most of us are familiar with the substance of the story of Queen Esther. She had been brought up from a little child by her uncle, Mordecai. She was called to the court of Ahasuerus, after he had deposed Vashti. Although the King did not know that this beautiful orphan girl was a Jewess, she found favor in his sight and became his queen.

All had gone well until King Ahasuerus had exalted a haughty and ruthless fellow, by the name of Haman, to the first place in the kingdom, or the prime minister of the realm. The king had commanded that all should bow before Haman and do him reverence; in other words, pay him divine honor. This Mordecai, the Jew, refused to do. The Bible says, "But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence." Because of that Haman was filled with jealous anger and plotted Mordecai's destruction. Haman conceived the terrible idea of wiping out the entire Jewish population of Persia with one general massacre. By means of lying Haman induced the king, who knew nothing of his real motive, to issue a decree that on a certain day all the Jews should be destroyed, because the deciver represented them as a people who were not in harmony with the kingdom in which they lived.

Then Mordecai put on sackcloth and ashes, and went to the gate of the king and cried loudly and bitterly. He sent a message to Esther and asked her to enter the presence of the king and make intercession for her people, for as yet she had not revealed the fact that she was a Jewess. She replied that she had not been called into the king's presence for some thirty days, and that he had a law that whoever entered, unbidden, into his presence, should be punished with death, unless it should please him to hold out the golden sceptre.

Our text also pictures for us an undeniable duty. With the words, "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Mordecai sought to persuade Esther to go to the king and to plead for the lives of her people. It was no small thing that he asked of her. For if she interceded for the Jews, her secret that she herself belonged to that condemned race would hardly remain hidden. Besides, according to Persian law, not even the queen was permitted to appear before the king except at the king's command. Mordecai knew all this as well as Esther did, but still he urged her to go to the king. He appealed to her to go and do her queenly duty and rescue her people.

Pointing to our perishing fellow men, God commands us to go to their rescue. What are we going to do about it? Shall we say no to Him?

Esther was tempted to say no. As she paced the floor of her private chamber and thought of the fate of her people, a voice within her whispered: "Don't go. You are young and beautiful, and you are the queen. To approach the king and to identify yourself with your condemned fellow Jews may cost you your life. Be satisfied that you are safe."

Because of Esther's love for her people and her God, she went into the presence of the king, and he extended to her the golden sceptre, and said, "What wilt thou, Queen Esther?"

and what is thy request? it shall even be given to thee to the half of the kingdom." She ultimately told him of the plot for the destruction of her people. He asked who it was that had planned thus. She replied that it was "that wicked" Haman, the man whom he had raised to great honor and supreme authority.

Haman had erected a gallows in the courtyard seventy-five feet high, on which he intended that Mordecai should be hanged. When the king heard of it, he gave commandment that Haman, and not Mordecai, should be hanged on the very gallows which he had prepared for another, and that Mordecai should be promoted to Haman's office.

## I. The Challenge.

### 1. He Challenges Through His Word.

His Word is the most vital, essential, fundamental, needed, and longed-for message in the universe. Warriors have sent out messages burning with patriotism; statesmen have spoken messages vital to the progress and best interests of their nation; orators have soared on eagles' wings; but none of these have the compulsion, magnetism, and imperativeness that God's Word has. His words are alive; they pulsate, throb, burn, and compel attention.

### 2. He Challenges Through His Works.

Man has been very busy in the world. He has wrought great and marvelous things. He has spanned the oceans, belted the earth, ribboned the nations with railroads and highways, annihilated distance, harnessed the air waves, bridled the lightning, and caused nature to serve him in a thousand ways. But his achievements are as a mole-hill by the side of a mountain when compared to the works of God. God came in the person of His Son to this cold, cruel, mocking, scoffing world. He went up and down the land performing miracles and saving the lost. He worked and walked, talked and taught, prayed and preached, cried and died for a world that was lost. His works challenge.

### 3. He Challenges Through His Wounds.

"He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."  
"He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed."  
His wounds constitute a trumpet-tongued challenge for each of us. God help us to tell the story of His wounds, for this is what the world needs.

## II. The Call

### 1. For Courage.

It is not always easy to answer and to obey God's challenge. It was not easy for Esther. She had to fan the furnace of her courage. When she did so, she declared, "And so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish." She was transformed from a wavering, hesitating, halting, fearful, lukewarm child of God into a bold, fearless, zealous, courageous, conquering heroine. What courage she manifested in comparison with the easy-going, pleasure-loving manner of life. Courage is needed today. Anyone may be willing to follow so long as the heavens are calm and the pathway is smooth, but the real test comes when the storm breaks and the pathway winds up a rugged mountainside.

2. For Character.

Character weighs more than heredity, education, money, or position. God is calling for men and women with character. He places far more emphasis on being than on doing. Marshall Field built up his great business on character. He was a poor farmer boy, who started in a small business, which became the greatest mercantile business in the world. When he began, he did so with character, but no capital. It was his ambition to sell goods for the smallest possible profits. If one of his clerks misled a customer, he was discharged. Customers flocked to his place of business, knowing that they would get a square deal, for he had character. God calls for unquestioned and irreproachable character.

3. For Compassion.

Jesus, seeing the multitudes, misled and unled, was filled with compassion. One of the present-day dangers is the paralysis of compassion. We get so accustomed to horrors, to slaughters, to crippling of men and women, that our peril is that we cease to feel these things at all. The secret of compassion is very simple. It means suffering with people. Whatever progress has been made toward a better world has come through the awakening of compassion. It will help us to be compassionate if we remember that our only hope is the compassion of God.

4. For Communion.

God calls us to be praying people. We have as our weapon in the combat of life and in facing the problems and opportunities of life, prayer. Prayer, which, in the days of Abraham, held back for a while God's hands from scattering fire over Sodom and Gomorrah. Prayer, which, in the days of Joshua, reached up and caught hold of the red bit of the sun and stopped it in mid-heaven. Prayer, which, in the days of Elijah, blew every cloud from the skies. Prayer, which, in the days of Daniel, walked the earth as a lion-tamer. Prayer, which, in the days of the Apostles, opened prison bars. Prayer, which, in the days of many adversaries, enabled Paul, when put in jail, to come out of the prison with a jail door under one arm and a convert under the other.

You can pray for any need--lengthened life, as Hezekiah did; for help, as Daniel did; for light, as Bartimaeus did; for mercy, as David did; for rain, as Elijah did; for a son, as Hannah did; for grace, as Paul did. You can pray anywhere--in the deep, like Jonah; on the sea or a house top, like Peter; on your bed, like Hezekiah; on the mountain, like Jesus; in the wilderness, like Hagar; in the street, like Jairus; in a cave, like David; on a cross, like the dying robber. You can pray any time--in the morning, as David did; at noon, as Daniel did; at midnight, as Paul and Silas did; in childhood, as Samuel did; in youth, as Timothy did; in manhood, as the centurion did; in age, as Simeon did; in sickness, as Job did; or in death, as did Jacob and the dying Christ.

5. For Consecration.

Esther gave herself wholly to the task. God cannot use those who are not dedicated. He can and will make a marvelous use of all of those who are dedicated to Him.

Christ's compassion and love kept his face set like a flint down the road environed with the horror of false accusations and blocked by a bloody cross. Christ-like

compassion will help us to see that crucifixion is the price of consecration, and that we bless when we bleed.

There are many notable examples of the way in which God has consecrated and used those who were dedicated.

A friend asked Wendell Phillips if he ever dedicated himself to God. He said, "Yes, when I was a boy of fourteen I heard Lyman Beecher preach on the theme, 'You Belong to God,' and I went home and prayed, 'O God, I belong to Thee. Take that which is Thine own.' From that day it has been so."

A man said to Moody, "Some of these times God is going to do marvels with some man who will let Him have full sway in his life." Moody prayed, "O God, let me be that man."

A committee of the Standard Oil Company was in session nearly all night. This committee had the authority and responsibility to find a capable and suitable man to open a business in China. It was agreed that he must be young, educated, and able to speak Chinese. Finally one member said, "I know a man who meets every requirement--he is now in the very city where we want him to be located." Another member said, "What salary does he get?" "Eight hundred dollars," was the answer. Another said, "There must be something wrong." "No, the difficulty is not with him, but with the people who pay him. He is a missionary." A man was given authority to cross the ocean and offer him \$10,000 and even a larger salary if it was necessary. The missionary declined the salary of \$12,500. The man said, "Well, name your own salary." "Oh, it is not that. The price is big enough, too big. You offer me a big salary for a small job. I have a big job on a small salary. I prefer that." There you have it. That is devotion to a cause; faithfulness to a mission; consecration to the Master.

### III. The Time

His Challenge and His Call are for today, the day in which we live.

#### 1. For Such a Test as We Face in These Days.

Esther was in a time, place, and environment that were to test and to reveal that she was. Her people were imperiled; their lives were in the balances; their future was dark and uncertain. A hero or a heroine was needed. The testing time had come. She met the test and saved the hour.

This is the testing time. Christianity is being tested as never before. How are we going to respond? There is no time for supineness, idleness, procrastination, or cowardliness. One test is, Will you use or abuse your opportunity? Another test is your ability to say "yes" and "no" when to do so may be hard, but right.

Years ago, in a Massachusetts town, someone said to Henry Wilson, "Henry, you ought to go to school." He replied, "I have no chance." A friend said, "Go join the Sons of Temperance, be sober yourself, and make a man." He took the advice and, year by year, grew. In his young-manhood, he was entrusted with a message to President Adams in Washington. President Adams knew that this young man's father was a terrible drunkard; and for this reason, he treated him with

great consideration. He said, "I desire that you shall meet some of the great men of the nation, and tomorrow you shall dine with me and them." When they went to the table, wine was on it. Adams assayed to drink with Henry. A blush mantled his cheeks; and in a manly way, he said, "Mr. Adams, you will please excuse me, Sir; I have a vow that prevents my taking wine." Adams put his glass on the table and said, "There will be no wine drunk at this table today." Every glass was pushed to the center of the table. Henry might have said, "I cannot set the customs for these men." Instead he said, "I do not propose to let the customs of the great destroy my vow." He said "no" so loud that the Senate, Congress, the press, and the world heard it; and later he became Vice-President. How admirable, stalwart, and grand are the young and old who can stand in the face of wrong practices and customs and say, "No."

2. For Such a Task as We Face in These Days.

God challenges us to match the opportunities that He has spread out before us. He has wonderfully blessed America--He has piled up the mountains, rolled out the plains, dug the channels for the rivers, imbedded her oceans, planted trees, entwined vines, scattered flowers, and made the land the spiritual Goshen of the world. We dare not fail now. Our task is to win lost souls to Christ and teach and train them for Him. In spite of difficulties, disappointments, and discouragements, we are making progress. More people are being won to Christ and church membership and Christian service than ever before.