

For Just a Time as This – Righteousness and Faithfulness

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We just had the Oscars for best movie and best actors and actresses the other weekend. I didn't watch it and I plan to never watch it during my lifetime. I have better things to do. However, there is a long history of the Oscars that started in 1929. People are awarded for good performances on the screen. The President gave out awards weeks ago to those who were either wounded in battle or showed great bravery during battle. They should be awarded. We like to see those who have put their life on the line to receive awards for their service. Companies give awards to good employees and the list can go on and on about how awards given. During the Easter season, we spend much time talking or thinking about how Jesus put his life on and over the line for mankind. A human medal could never be enough to give thanks to our Lord for what He did on the cross. Sometimes we may think what can we do or give to our Lord for all the pain and suffering that He went through. Plus, all the warfare He had to deal with while battling with satan. What can we do to show our appreciation for the love and sacrifice that Jesus displayed at the cross? There are many things, but we'll look at two today.

Let's turn to the Old Testament to Esther. The Israel people had been conquered by the Babylonians and then the Persians conquered them. So, the Jews no longer had true freedom like they had before. The Persians allowed more freedom to the Jews than what the Babylonians did and they allowed some Jews back to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. Nehemiah, who rebuilds the wall in Jerusalem, comes after Esther. Ezra comes after Esther as well. All the Jews, including those who returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem had been living in a pagan society. They had to cling to their Jewish teachings while being in captivity in a pagan world. Just imagine for a moment you are taken from where you're at right now and transported to North Korea or China or Iran where being a Jew or Christian is looked down upon. I think we would try our best to cling to what we believed in when we lived here in America. We would try to remember how we used to worship the Lord and try to remember the songs and Scripture verses we liked to read. It would not be an easy thing to do. The Jewish people tried their best to live in the conditions they had to live in. King

Xerxes' queen was deposed and a new queen was needed. So, a search was done and Esther was chosen as queen. The problem was she was a Jew, but this information was not given to the king since he didn't ask for it. At the same time, the new queen's cousin was working for the king as well. Tradition has it that Mordecai served as a minor official or gatekeeper at the king's palace in Susa. In other words, he may have served as security of the palace courtyard. So, here is a Jew working in the palace of a pagan king that runs a pagan nation. However, Mordecai is a faithful Jew. We read this in Esther 2: 21-23, ²¹One day as Mordecai was on duty at the king's gate, two of the king's eunuchs, Bigthana^[a] and Teresh—who were guards at the door of the king's private quarters—became angry at King Xerxes and plotted to assassinate him. ²²But Mordecai heard about the plot and gave the information to Queen Esther. She then told the king about it and gave Mordecai credit for the report. ²³When an investigation was made and Mordecai's story was found to be true, the two men were impaled on a sharpened pole. This was all recorded in *The Book of the History of King Xerxes' Reign.*(NLT – www.biblegateway.com)

I find this very interesting. Even though Mordecai and Esther are Jews living in a pagan world, they still had morals and ethics. Most people, if they were being held captive, would care less if king Xerxes would be killed. Who would blame Mordecai for not caring if king Xerxes was killed or not. However, Mordecai saw the bigger picture. One, things could get bad for Esther, since she was queen if king is killed. Second, things were not too bad for the Jews at this time. King Xerxes allowed some freedom to the Jews. Third, Mordecai was a righteous and faithful man to his God. Mordecai could not allow this evil plot against the king to go unnoticed. It shows the character of Mordecai. He was the salt Jesus talks about in Matthew 5: 13 in that palace where he worked. Even though he was captive in a pagan world, Mordecai made the best of it by staying true to God. Is this always easy – no, not always. However, Mordecai was awarded for his good morals and ethics. We read this in chapter 6, ⁶That night the king had trouble sleeping, so he ordered an attendant to bring the book of the history of his reign so it could be read to him. ²In those records he discovered an account of how Mordecai had exposed the plot of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the eunuchs who guarded the door to the king's private quarters. They had plotted to assassinate King Xerxes.³“What reward or recognition did we ever give Mordecai for this?” the king asked.His attendants replied, “Nothing has been done for him.”⁴“Who is that in the outer court?” the king inquired. As it happened, Haman had just arrived in the outer court of the palace to ask the king to impale Mordecai on the

pole he had prepared.⁵ So the attendants replied to the king, "Haman is out in the court." "Bring him in," the king ordered.⁶ So Haman came in, and the king said, "What should I do to honor a man who truly pleases me?" Haman thought to himself, "Whom would the king wish to honor more than me?"⁷ So he replied, "If the king wishes to honor someone,⁸ he should bring out one of the king's own royal robes, as well as a horse that the king himself has ridden—one with a royal emblem on its head.⁹ Let the robes and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble officials. And let him see that the man whom the king wishes to honor is dressed in the king's robes and led through the city square on the king's horse. Have the official shout as they go, 'This is what the king does for someone he wishes to honor!'"¹⁰ "Excellent!" the king said to Haman. "Quick! Take the robes and my horse, and do just as you have said for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the gate of the palace. Leave out nothing you have suggested!" (NLT- - www.biblegateway.com)

Mordecai is awarded for his good morals. The king couldn't sleep one night, so he had the book mentioned in chapter two given to him to read. The history book of his reign. He discovered Mordecai never was awarded for his actions. I'm sure God had something to do with this. Mordecai did what he was supposed to do as a Jew. Israel was to be the light on top of the world for God to the nations around them. Even though they failed most of the time, Mordecai followed the course as an individual. Let's take this a step further.

As this is going on, the prime minister who was called Haman, did not like Jews and he did not like Mordecai because Mordecai would not bow down to him even though Haman had a high position. Mordecai would only bow down to one person and that was God Himself. Mordecai was only obeying one of God's Ten Commandments found in Exodus 20 – don't bow down to any idol, images, or other gods. Haman's hate for Mordecai became so great; he wanted all Jews to be killed throughout the empire. So, he arranged a scheme to get this accomplished. Mordecai found out about this, so he went to the queen, his cousin and a Jew, and asked her to go the king and let him know what is going on. Mordecai knew what evil was going on so he went to the right person who had the best chance of seeing the king without being killed because you didn't see the king unless he asked for you. Esther would use caution and wisdom to say the right things at the

right time to the king. We read the final outcome here in chapter 7, “ 7 So the king and Haman went to Queen Esther’s banquet. ² On this second occasion, while they were drinking wine, the king again said to Esther, “Tell me what you want, Queen Esther. What is your request? I will give it to you, even if it is half the kingdom!”³ Queen Esther replied, “If I have found favor with the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my request, I ask that my life and the lives of my people will be spared. ⁴ For my people and I have been sold to those who would kill, slaughter, and annihilate us. If we had merely been sold as slaves, I could remain quiet, for that would be too trivial a matter to warrant disturbing the king.”⁵ “Who would do such a thing?” King Xerxes demanded. “Who would be so presumptuous as to touch you?”⁶ Esther replied, “This wicked Haman is our adversary and our enemy.” Haman grew pale with fright before the king and queen. ⁷ Then the king jumped to his feet in a rage and went out into the palace garden. Haman, however, stayed behind to plead for his life with Queen Esther, for he knew that the king intended to kill him. ⁸ In despair he fell on the couch where Queen Esther was reclining, just as the king was returning from the palace garden. The king exclaimed, “Will he even assault the queen right here in the palace, before my very eyes?” And as soon as the king spoke, his attendants covered Haman’s face, signaling his doom.⁹ Then Harbona, one of the king’s eunuchs, said, “Haman has set up a sharpened pole that stands seventy-five feet^[a] tall in his own courtyard. He intended to use it to impale Mordecai, the man who saved the king from assassination.” “Then impale Haman on it!” the king ordered. ¹⁰ So they impaled Haman on the pole he had set up for Mordecai, and the king’s anger subsided. (NLT – www.biblegateway.com)

Mordecai and Esther had to make some tough decisions in the pagan world that they lived in. Esther really struggled with this and for good reason. She could have died going to the king without being asked. We struggle as well. As Christians, we don’t like rocking the boat or cause waves. If you ever took a small boat out on a lake, one of the fun things to do is direct the boat to go in a circle so the boat can hop over the waves it is creating. Have you ever done that? Mordecai saw the bigger picture and he really forced Esthers hand in this issue of getting involved and causing waves. In fact, to me, the most important piece of

Scripture in the Book of Esther is 4: 13 where Mordecai states this to Esther as she is trying to stay out of the Haman issue, “¹³ Mordecai sent this reply to Esther: “Don’t think for a moment that because you’re in the palace you will escape when all other Jews are killed. ¹⁴ If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance and relief for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your relatives will die. Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this? (NLT – www.biblegateway.com)”

God had placed Mordecai and Esther at this time period, at this situation, to be light in a pagan world. Mordecai made some people mad by his faithfulness to God’s commands, but he didn’t let that bother him. If he had just sat back and did nothing, it would have changed world events to come and not in a good way. Thousands of Jews would have been killed. If Esther had kept her mouth shut, she may have lost her life as well if it was found out she was a Jew. Mordecai was faithful to God. He was like Abraham in the Old Testament. God thought this about Abraham in Genesis 15: 5, “And Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord declared him righteous because of his faith. (NLT)” That was the award God gave to Abraham because of his faith in God – declared him righteous. Paul states this in Romans 4: 20-22, “Abraham never wavered in believing God’s promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. He was absolutely convinced that God was able to do anything he promised. And because of Abraham’s faith, God declared him to be righteous. (NLT)” His faith brought glory to God. Does our faith bring glory to our Lord? Does our faith bring glory to the one who died in our place on the cross? Abraham did this out of love for his God. What can we bring before Jesus who died on the cross for us? We can show our love to Him by asking Him to help our faith to grow like Abraham’s. We ask the Jesus to help us to understand we have been put here for such a time as this to do His work faithfully like Mordecai and Esther did in a pagan world. Even when we do that, we may hear the words, “The Lord declared him (her) righteous because of his (her) faith.” Wouldn’t that be wonderful words to hear from our Lord to us? You have been put here for such a time as this. Don’t waste the opportunity. Ask the Lord this Easter season to help your faith to grow stronger and stronger so you

can be salt to this dying world which will cause many to give God the glory. Let's give Him our love and faith.

NLT Life Application Study Bible. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.: Wheaton, 1996