

Esther on Behalf of Israel



The Ministry of Intercession (Part 4)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again sharing with you out of truths that life has taught me, truths that have made the difference between success and failure in my life and can do the same in yours.

This week I'm sharing on God's key to solving the unsolvable, "The Ministry of Intercession." In my previous talks this week, I've taken examples of this ministry of intercession from three great servants of God: Abraham, Moses and Daniel. Certain features are emerging from our examples which characterize men and women who have mastered this art of intercession.

For example, let me list some. First, intimacy with God; second, boldness in approaching God; third, conviction of God's absolute justice both positive and negative, that God will spare the righteous but judge the wicked; fourth, a concern for God's glory and, conversely, a disregard of personal interests and ambitions; fifth, a dedication to the task even at the cost of life itself, even if it means the lion's den; and sixth, willingness to identify with those for whom we intercede. This kind of praying is not like that of the Pharisee who said, "God I thank Thee that I am not as other men are." This kind of praying identifies itself with those for whom we pray. We say, "We have sinned" not "They have sinned."

Now, for our fourth example of the ministry of intercession we will look today at the story of Queen Esther. The incident we're going to look at is taken from the 4th chapter of the book of Esther. But first, we need to fill in briefly the historical background. Esther was a beautiful Jewish maiden in the Persian Empire in the time of the exile of the Jewish people from their land and from the city of Jerusalem. She was an orphan who had been brought up by her uncle Mordecai. Mordecai was an important official in the court of the Persian Emperor. At a certain point, Esther had been chosen to become the new queen of the Persian Empire and had been raised up to a position of tremendous importance in the Emperor's palace, in the King's palace. However, Esther had never publicly revealed the fact that she was Jewish.

After she had been raised up as queen, a certain anti-Semite, an official in the court of the Persian Emperor named Haman, had hatched a plot and obtained the endorsement of the Emperor that on a certain day some way ahead there would

be a program against the Jewish people in the entire Persian Empire and they would all be destroyed. His plan was nothing less than that of total genocide, the destruction of the entire Jewish nation. And probably all the Jews in the world were living at that time within the borders of the Persian Empire. So it was a desperate situation.

When this decree went forth, Mordecai sent a message to Esther in the Queen's palace that it was her responsibility to get to the King and persuade him to change his mind about the decree. Esther sent back word that she had had no access to the King for quite a while. Then the message came back again from Mordecai to Esther and that she was to go in on behalf of her people. She sent back again this word, and we're going to read now from Esther 4:11-17:

> "'All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned by the king has but one law: that he be put to death. The only exception to this is for the king to extend the gold scepter to him and spare his life. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king.' When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, he sent back this answer: 'Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?' Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: 'Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa (that's the capital city), and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.' So Mordecai went away and carried out all of Esther's instructions." (NIV)

Well, there's a picture again of an intercessor. Note the commitment. "If I perish, I perish." Whether I live or die, that's not the most important question. The most important question is that I do what I can on behalf of my people.

Note what Mordecai said. "Who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?" This applies to us, as Christians. We're a kingdom of priests. We've come to royal position. We cannot turn away from our responsibilities and be indifferent any more than Esther could. We must be willing to identify ourselves with the rest of God's people. We cannot hide away in some palace and say, "Well, this crisis doesn't concern me." We've got to be like Daniel, like Esther; willing to lay down our life, to risk all, to stand by the people of God, to identify ourselves with God's purposes, to take up the prayer burden. And then notice that Esther, just like Daniel, knew that there are times when praying alone is not enough. She said, "Not only must we pray, but all of us will have to fast three days and three nights, and after we've prayed and fasted, then I'll go in to the king and see what comes."

Now, we'll read how Esther went in to the king. Reading on in the book of Esther 5:1-3:

> "On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace, [I like that phrase, 'the inner court'; intercession always means coming into the inner court, into the immediate presence of the Lord. So she stood in the inner court of the palace] in front of the king's hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall, facing the entrance. When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand. [That was the evidence that he was prepared to show mercy, that he would not apply the law that she was to be put to death. So Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter. By that act, she availed herself of the mercies that the king was offering. I think that's something that we have to learn to do, to go into God's presence and when He stretches out the scepter of mercy, we have to touch the tip of the scepter.] Then the king asked, 'What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you.'" (NIV)

She had prevailed. The rest of the book of Esther is the unfolding of the consequences of her intercession. But that is the point at which the victory was won for the Jewish people. It always is, I believe, won in intercession. That's the place where history is made, the course and destiny of nations are changed, that's where we become the kind of rulers that God wants us to be.

I just want you to see one beautiful fact about Esther that when she went in to the king, she didn't go in as a beggar, she didn't grovel. She put on her royal robes, she stood there in his presence a beautiful and lovely queen.

So Esther went in like a queen. She put on her royal apparel. She recognized who she was. She took her rightful position. I believe the same applies to you and me as Christians. We've got to recognize who we are in God's sight, the position God has elevated us to. We're not to grovel. We're not to go as beggars.

Listen to these beautiful words in the 52nd chapter of Isaiah:

> "Awake, awake, O Zion, clothe yourself with strength. Put on your garments of splendor, O Jerusalem, the holy city. The uncircumcised and defiled will not enter you again. Shake off your dust; rise up, city enthroned, O Jerusalem. Free yourself from the chains on your neck, O captive Daughter of Zion." (NIV)

I believe that's a challenge to us and the way we pray. We are to become what God says we are. We're not to grovel. We're to get out of the dust. We're to arise and sit on the throne that God has offered us that we may rule with Him in prayer and intercession. Notice some of the things that this passage implies. First of all, what we must put on. We must put on strength and beauty. There's a beautiful verse in Psalm 96, verse 6, where it says:

> "Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and glory are in his sanctuary." (NIV)

God wants us to put on the strength and the glory that are appropriate to His sanctuary, to His inner courts. And then we must put away all that defiles. Symbolically it says the uncircumcised and defiled will not enter. We have to be pure. And then we must put away all that binds. We are to loose ourselves from the chains on our necks. What kinds of chains bind us when we come to God in prayer? I think they're chains like doubt and unbelief and fear and wrong attitudes and relationships. We're to release ourselves from these chains. And then we're to take this decisive action. We're to arise, we're not to lie there and grovel any longer. We're to realize the kind of persons we are in God and according to our destiny. Arise up and act like what God desires us to be.

Let's go back to the picture of Esther just for a closing moment. Esther had taken the place of a previous queen, Vashti, who had been deposed. The reason why Vashti was deposed was when the king held a great banquet in celebration, at the climax to the banquet he wanted to present to his people the queen in all her beauty, she had her own banquet and she refused to come. So for that she was deposed. And I want to point out to you very simply the difference between Vashti and Esther as queens. I'll put it this way: Vashti put her own plans and activities before the wishes of the king, but Esther put the wishes of the king and the need of her people before her own life and desires.

I believe that applies to the church today. So many times the church is like Vashti, busy with its own programs, its own plans, its own preoccupations, not open to what the king has to say. I pray that we may become a church like Queen Esther, putting the will of the king and the needs of our fellow people before our own life, if necessary.

Note that Esther's intercession shaped the course of history and remember that you and I can do the same.

All right, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. I'll continue with this theme of intercession. I'll be showing you how we can apply it in a practical way to our own lives.

Radio Program

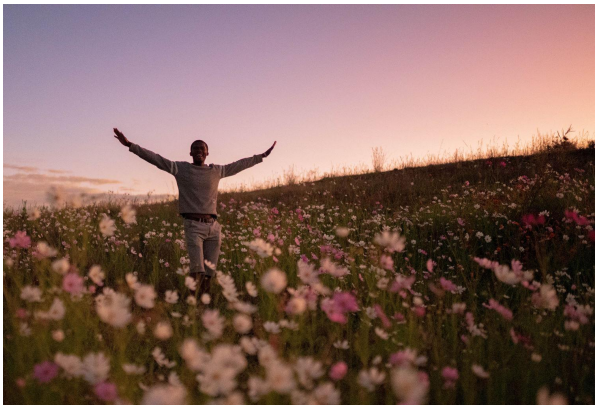
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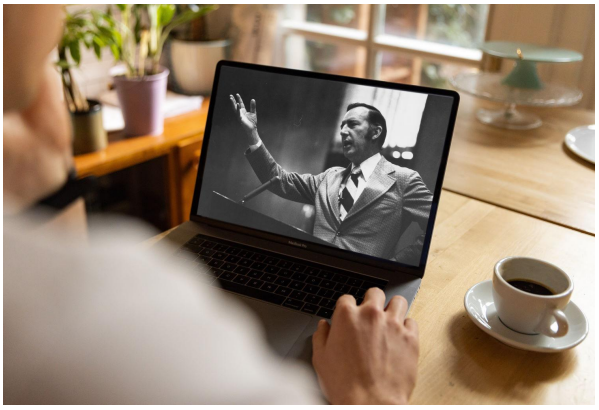
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