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On this week's episode of Chosen and Cherished, we talked about Abraham's "functional faith." What is it and how does it impact how he lived? How does it impact how we live? If you'd like to listen to the podcast, here's the link... <https://summitpoint.org/chosen-and-cherished/>

*Blessings,
Jonna*

Esther 4:11-16 ~

As I look at this passage, I see that I am definitely starting in the middle of a conversation. What has taken place before this? This is the story of Esther. Esther was a Jewish young woman living in a land not her own. As in so many situations throughout scripture and throughout history, her people were hated by other nations. Though God's name isn't mentioned in this book, His hand is all over it.

God appointed Esther to become queen of Persia... though no one realized it was Him. God used Esther to stop a plot that would have wiped out the Jews... the closest thing we have to seeing that it was God is that she called for a fast among the Jews. It doesn't even say that they prayed. But God was all over it.

Here, in vs. 11-16, I enter the middle of a conversation. Esther's uncle, Mordecai, who raised her, had one of the king's eunuchs bring a signed decree to her declaring that the Persians were given a date when they would be allowed to annihilate the Jews. (The king, agreeing to sign this decree, did not know that his new wife was a Jew.)

Mordecai was grieving in sackcloth and ashes at the palace gates. Esther sent word and begged him to stop. I don't think she understood what was happening. Mordecai had the eunuch, Hathach, bring the decree to Esther on his behalf and command her to go to the king and plead with him on behalf of her people.

Esther told Hathach to tell Mordecai that if she went to the king without him calling her to come, she could be put to death. Esther already knew what he had done to his first wife when

she disrespected him. She said, "He hasn't called me to come to him in 30 days!"

Mordecai's reply was, "Don't think because you're in the palace you'll escape the fate of your people." Maybe she thought, "Surely this won't happen to me. I'm the queen." But I think that was fear talking, not confidence. If she thought her position as queen was secure, she wouldn't have questioned going to the king when asked.

Mordecai's faith was pretty amazing in the face of the tragedy that was decreed. He had Hathach say to 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?" Wow. Mordecai, in at least part, was protecting Esther by telling her to risk her life. He was essentially saying what Jesus said in Matthew 10:28, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell." Make your loyalty to God above all men... no matter how great the risk or the cost.

Esther heard Mordecai's words and her heart grew courage. "What IF God has put me here for such a time as this?" He absolutely has!!! Psalm 139:16 says, "In Your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them." Esther WAS born for such a time as this, just as I am born for such a time as this. God has a plan for EVERY one of His children. I may not understand the plan. I may not understand the depth and breadth of the plan. But He has a plan. The question is, will I follow His plan?

Esther followed His plan. She called for a fast. This was a costly fast because of a costly issue. She called for all the Jews, including herself and her women with her, to go without food or drink for 3 days and nights. And then she would go to the king.

Why fast? Why not just go to the king? This HAD to be fasting AND prayer, surrendering it to the Lord. Going without food means nothing in itself. But denying comfort in order to seek the Lord for wisdom and refuge is massive. Esther knew it was necessary BEFORE going to the king. Go to the KING before going to the king.

Esther said, "After the 3 days, I WILL go to the king, though it is against the law (of Persia), and if I perish, I perish." Through her conversation with Mordecai, Esther's perspective and resolve changed. What would it really matter for her to live if all her people would be destroyed? She went from self-preservation to self-sacrifice. That's what happens when I replace my perspective with God's perspective.

What does it matter if I "gain the whole world but lose my soul" (Matthew 16:26)? What does God have for ME to do? Am I willing to say "send me" and trust Him for the outcome? The truth is, no matter what I face here and now, I will spend eternity with the Lord.

I know if I read on that God DID use Esther to deliver her people from utter destruction. And I know that the 3 days of fasting was not the way she earned His help. It was the way she

surrendered to His help. Mordecai had already said God WOULD deliver His people. That was not in question. Her fasting and the call for all the Jews to fast was a surrender to God's plan... Your will, Your way. Nothing more. Nothing less. Nothing else.

O Lord, I can't earn Your favor. But I already have it. The 3 day "fast" that saved me was the 3 days Jesus was in the tomb. And just like You delivered the Jews from earthly destruction, You have delivered me from ETERNAL destruction. I pray that my response will be... in whatever circumstances I face... Yes, Lord. I see that there's a much bigger picture than just personal comfort. Let me walk in Your strength and courage and be faithful to Your will. Let me never forget the cost YOU paid for my deliverance. No cost I pay can even come close to measuring up to that.

One other thing that is so helpful for me with this story is that Esther didn't wallow in shame for not saying yes to the plan immediately. She didn't look back to her questioning. She moved forward with courage. Looking back in shame would have gotten her stuck, making her ineffective for God's plan. I pray that the Lord will help me to not to look back in shame on my failures but press on ahead in the courage that God supplies. He is faithful. His faithfulness is not dependent on my perfection.

O Lord, please help me to wait for You. Help me not to take matters into my own hands, but to entrust everything to You. Your word says in Proverbs 16:3, "Commit your work to the Lord and your plans will be established." I pray that I will commit everything to You... and let You lead.