

Monday, August 19

**All passages taken from Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996.
Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189.
All rights reserved.**

Esther 4:1 - 7:10

4 **1** When Mordecai learned about all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on burlap and ashes, and went out into the city, crying with a loud and bitter wail. **2** He went as far as the gate of the palace, for no one was allowed to enter the palace gate while wearing clothes of mourning. **3** And as news of the king's decree reached all the provinces, there was great mourning among the Jews. They fasted, wept, and wailed, and many people lay in burlap and ashes. **4** When Queen Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her about Mordecai, she was deeply distressed. She sent clothing to him to replace the burlap, but he refused it. **5** Then Esther sent for Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs who had been appointed as her attendant. She ordered him to go to Mordecai and find out what was troubling him and why he was in mourning. **6** So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the square in front of the palace gate. **7** Mordecai told him the whole story, including the exact amount of money Haman had promised to pay into the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews. **8** Mordecai gave Hathach a copy of the decree issued in Susa that called for the death of all Jews. He asked Hathach to show it to Esther and explain the situation to her. He also asked Hathach to direct her to go to the king to beg for mercy and plead for her people. **9** So Hathach returned to Esther with Mordecai's message. **10** Then Esther told Hathach to go back and relay this message to Mordecai: **11** "All the king's officials and even the people in the provinces know that anyone who appears before the king in his inner court without being invited is doomed to die unless the king holds out his gold scepter. And the king has not called for me to come to him for thirty days." **12** So Hathach gave Esther's message to Mordecai. **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?" **15** Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: **16** "Go and gather together all the Jews of Susa and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will do the same. And then, though it is against the law, I will go in to see the king. If I must die, I must die." **17** So Mordecai went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him.

5 **1** On the third day of the fast, Esther put on her royal robes and entered the inner court of the palace, just across from the king's hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne, facing the entrance. **2** When he saw Queen Esther standing there in the inner court, he welcomed her and held out the gold scepter to her. So Esther approached and touched the end of the scepter. **3** Then the king asked her, "What do you want, Queen Esther? What is your request? I will give it to you, even if it is half the kingdom!" **4** And Esther replied, "If it please the king, let the king and Haman come today to a banquet I have prepared for the king." **5** The king turned to his attendants and said, "Tell Haman to come quickly to a banquet, as Esther has requested." So the king and Haman went to Esther's banquet. **6** And while they were drinking wine, the king said to Esther, "Now tell me what you really want. What is your request? I will give it to you, even if it is half the kingdom!" **7** Esther replied, "This is my request and deepest wish. **8** If I have found favor with the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my request and do what I ask, please come with Haman tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare for you. Then I will explain what this is all about." **9** Haman was a happy man as he left the banquet! But when he saw Mordecai sitting at the palace gate, not standing up or trembling nervously before him, Haman became furious. **10** However, he restrained himself and went on home. Then Haman gathered together his friends and Zeresh, his wife, **11** and boasted to them about his great wealth and his many children. He bragged about the honors the king had given him and how he had been promoted over all the other nobles and officials. **12** Then Haman added, "And that's not all! Queen Esther invited only me and the king himself to the banquet she prepared for us. And she has invited me to dine with her and the king again tomorrow!" **13** Then he added, "But this is all worth nothing as long as I see Mordecai the Jew just sitting there at the palace gate." **14** So Haman's wife, Zeresh, and all his friends suggested, "Set up a sharpened pole that stands seventy-five feet tall, and in the morning ask the king to impale Mordecai on it. When this is done, you can go on your merry way to the banquet with the king." This pleased Haman, and he ordered the pole set up.

6 **1** That 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. **2** In 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!" **11** So Haman took the robes and put them on Mordecai, placed him on the king's own horse, and led him through the city square, shouting, "This is what the king does for someone he wishes to honor!" **12** Afterward Mordecai returned to the palace gate, but Haman hurried home dejected and completely humiliated. **13** When Haman told his wife, Zeresh, and all his friends what had happened, his wise advisers and his wife said, "Since Mordecai—this man who has humiliated you—is of Jewish birth, you will never succeed in your plans against him. It will be fatal to continue opposing him." **14** While they were still talking, the king's eunuchs arrived and quickly took Haman to the banquet Esther had prepared.

7 1 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 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.

1 Corinthians 12:1 - 26

12 **1** Now, dear brothers and sisters, regarding your question about the special abilities the Spirit gives us. I don’t want you to misunderstand this. **2** You know that when you were still pagans, you were led astray and swept along in worshiping speechless idols. **3** So I want you to know that no one speaking by the Spirit of God will curse Jesus, and no one can say Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit. **4** There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. **5** There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. **6** God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us. **7** A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. **8** To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice ; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge. **9** The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing. **10** He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. **11** It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have. **12** The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. **13** Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit. **14** Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part. **15** If the foot says, “I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand,” that does not make it any less a part of the body. **16** And if the ear says, “I am not part of the body because I am not an eye,” would that make it any less a part of the body? **17** If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything? **18** But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. **19** How strange a body would be if it had only one part! **20** Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. **21** The eye can never say to the hand, “I don’t need you.” The head can’t say to the feet, “I don’t need you.” **22** In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary. **23** And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So we carefully protect those parts that should not be seen, **24** while the more honorable parts do not require this special care. So God has put the body together such that extra honor

and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. **25** This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. **26** If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad.

Psalm 36:1 - 12

36 **1** Sin whispers to the wicked, deep within their hearts. They have no fear of God at all. **2** In their blind conceit, they cannot see how wicked they really are. **3** Everything they say is crooked and deceitful. They refuse to act wisely or do good. **4** They lie awake at night, hatching sinful plots. Their actions are never good. They make no attempt to turn from evil. **5** Your unfailing love, O LORD, is as vast as the heavens; your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds. **6** Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your justice like the ocean depths. You care for people and animals alike, O LORD. **7** How precious is your unfailing love, O God! All humanity finds shelter in the shadow of your wings. **8** You feed them from the abundance of your own house, letting them drink from your river of delights. **9** For you are the fountain of life, the light by which we see. **10** Pour out your unfailing love on those who love you; give justice to those with honest hearts. **11** Don't let the proud trample me or the wicked push me around. **12** Look! Those who do evil have fallen! They are thrown down, never to rise again.

Proverbs 21:21 - 22

21 **21** Whoever pursues righteousness and unfailing love will find life, righteousness, and honor. **22** The wise conquer the city of the strong and level the fortress in which they trust.