

Esther Pleading for Her People

How ready most of us are to put off some plain duty, to turn aside from some obvious opportunity of service, until to-morrow. But the golden moment is really the present. Is there something we ought to do? It should be done "at this time"—now.

Then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, v. 14.

God calls us to be His instruments. He honors us with opportunities in His service. He lays the responsibility of His work upon our shoulders. Nevertheless we are not the only people in the world, and the divine purpose does not stand or fall with our faithfulness or the lack of it. If we will not go, another will be found who will. The Reformation did not depend upon Luther alone; it would have come through another agency had he declined the task. But he would have missed forever the opportunity of his life, his name would have been erased from history and his crown of service given to another.

Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this? v. 14. Each cog in the machinery has its own appointed task. Even the wayside weed

Each Cog its Task

has its purpose, if nothing more, a drop of honey to contribute to the common good. God had placed Esther on the Persian throne to deliver His people, Mordecai at the gate to give her courage and advice. He sent to the king a sleepless night, that it might assist in the great design. All people and events have their purpose to serve. As the Lord brought

Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees, as He sent Moses to deliver Israel from Egypt, so has He a task for each of us. Our task undone, the whole world lags.

Esther put on her royal apparel, ch. 5 : 1.

It was not enough that the queen had decided to do her duty to her countrymen at all hazards. It was not enough that for three days and nights, she should have proclaimed a fast, the most intense form of ancient prayer. She did not neglect other and more extreme aids to the accomplishment of her purpose. Nor in the great enterprises of our church, or the great schemes of moral reform, are we to think it sufficient merely to decide upon their rightness or necessity and to pray over them. We must take every pains to secure success. The organization should be perfected, and the administration prudent. There is really nothing secular when employed in a sacred cause. The object sanctifies it. Esther's royal apparel became part of a patriotic and sacred duty.

What wilt thou? . . . to the half of the kingdom, v. 3. Who can read these words without thinking of another Sovereign, not ruled by

passion or caprice, but moved by justice and love. "The A King's Offer half of the kingdom"—is this

the offer He makes to us? Nay, He has given us the Son who is the Ruler of the kingdom. No greater gift could even He bestow, who controls the riches and resources of heaven. And this Gift is the pledge that He will withhold nothing needful from us, when we come as petitioners to His throne.

TEACHING HINTS

This section embraces teaching material for the various grades in the school.

For Teachers of the Older Scholars

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To make the most of this Lesson demands a good deal of work. Study the whole book. Understand the political and religious condition of the Jews in Palestine, and throughout the Persian Empire. Advanced classes should look at the problems of this book; as authorship, historicity, and the testimony of secular literature, especially Greek history.

A period of 50 years elapsed between the 6th and 7th chapters of Ezra, of which there is no record of affairs at Jerusalem. It was during this interval that events of great importance took place at the Persian Court. Some of these are recorded in the Book of Esther.

Briefly sketch the life of Esther, her parentage, social position, guardian, natural beauty. Note how she became queen, and the light it sheds on the degradation of women in the Persian Court. Bring out the causes of the great disaster which threatened her